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MY VOICE AND I

OR THE RELATION OF THE SINGER TO THE SONG

BY

CLARA KATHLEEN ROGERS

(CLARA DORIA)

Author of "*The Philosophy of Singing*"

CHICAGO

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To

THOSE WHO FOLLOW ART

NOT AS A MEANS OF DISTINGUISHING THEMSELVES,

BUT OF FULFILLING THEIR OWN HIGHEST

POSSIBILITIES, I DEDICATE

THIS BOOK

"Hear thou even the little child, and from his words accept thou the Truth that goeth straight to thy heart. But reject all that doth not so go to thy heart — no matter how high the authority — yea, even though the lotus-born creator, Brahm, himself, be the speaker."

YOGAVASISHTHA.

"When the pupil is ready, the teacher appears."

"When I pass, all my children know me."

— *From a Poem of the East.*

PREFACE

THE *chief purpose of the following work is to draw attention to certain radical errors in the education of singers, — errors that have become common, I may say almost universal. It is not written to found a school of singing, nor does it profess to lay down the law as to how singing should be done. It is an attempt, rather, to throw light on the principles which underlie the true art of singing, and thus to prevent students from wasting their time and talent in pursuing a wrong road, and to induce them to cultivate their musical sense, and to rely on it, instead of upon false and artificial systems that have become conventional.*

Long and close observation has convinced me that these systems result in the

gradual killing out of all true artistic impulse, and it is because of this conviction that I have been impelled to set forth this plea for a fresh and more rational consideration of the subject.

C. K. R.

Boston, Mass.,
July 1, 1910.

NOTE

CLARA KATHLEEN ROGERS, *more familiarly known to the profession and followers of music by her stage name, "Clara Doria," was born at Cheltenham, England, January 14, 1844. Music is her inheritance and has been her life-work. She is the daughter of John Barnett (1802–1890) referred to by Grove as "The Father of English Opera." His first grand opera, "The Mountain Sylph," was produced in London with great success in 1834, and was followed by "Fair Rosamond" in 1836, and "Farinelli" in 1839. He was likewise the composer of many pieces of instrumental music and thousands of songs. Her mother, daughter of Robert Lindley, the famous English violoncellist (1776–1855),*

was also musically gifted, and her parents were her earliest teachers. From 1856 to 1860 she was a pupil of the Leipsic Conservatory, enjoying the tuition of such eminent teachers as Moscheles, Plaidy, Papperitz, Richter, David, and Rietz. After her graduation, she studied opera with San Giovanni in Milan and made her début at Turin as Isabella in "Robert the Devil." After a successful career as an opera singer and several years' experience as a concert singer in London, she came to this country in 1871 with Mme. Parepa-Rosa, making her début at New York in "The Bohemian Girl"; and later she sang under the leadership of Maretzeck. She then became the wife of Henry Munroe Rogers, a well-known lawyer, and settled down in Boston, where she has since resided, devoting herself to teaching and composition. She has written numerous songs, and several high-class pieces for the piano, and for violin and

piano together, besides a treatise upon "The Philosophy of Singing," published in 1893. That treatise is now followed by the present volume, which sets forth the fruits of her ripened experience.

It will be seen from this brief sketch of her career that Mrs. Rogers is qualified to pronounce with authority upon the subject which has engaged her pen so forcibly and attractively. The suggestions which she offers and the conclusions at which she arrives as the outcome of her long experience are many of them novel, some of them unique, and all of them valuable to all thinking teachers and students of vocal music. She demolishes many fads of technique, upsets many of the old conventional theories, and lays great stress upon the Ego as the voice-controller and developer. In other words, as it was said of some great painter that he mixed his colors with brains, so she affirms the potency of the reasoning power, the imagi-

nation, and the will as the dominating elements in the cultivation and development of the voice. Her pronouncements might be regarded as a sort of musical "Science and Health." Possibly they will provoke attack in some quarters and challenge discussion in others; but they will command respect from all, as well as admiration for the literary skill with which they are presented. For "Clara Doria" is a literary as well as a musical artist, philosopher as well as teacher, who has established well-defined relations between "the Voice and I," and added a valuable contribution to the literature of this subject.

GEORGE P. UPTON.

CHICAGO, *July, 1910*

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MY VOICE AND I

MY VOICE AND I

Chapter I. Introductory

SINGING FROM A PSYCHOLOGICAL STANDPOINT

IT is strange that so much should have been written and taught about the relation of voice to its physical organ, and so little about the relation of voice to the singer. And yet, when we consider that without the volition of the singer the organ that produces the voice —no matter how perfectly constructed— would remain dumb forever, it would seem reasonable to inquire into the psychological aspect of singing also.

As the vocal instrument is essentially plastic to the will, and adapted to express whatever the mind formulates, mind becomes the ruling factor, inasmuch as it can either create or destroy the musical and expressive quality which we

demand in singing. It conceives the idea of sound; and the beauty or ugliness thereof is principally a question of ability to conceive tone that is beautiful or otherwise.

Yet in many cases we train the instrument only, or at least, we make it our chief consideration, instead of training the singer, who is the real motive power that causes the vocal machinery to produce one effect rather than another. Now, we cannot educate the singer without at the same time improving the action of the vocal instrument itself, but we can train the instrument without improving the singer. I hold, therefore, that if a treatise on singing is to be of any real, practical value, it must demonstrate what part the singer must play, as a *complete human intelligence* plus a mechanism, instead of simply indicating how the vocal parts perform their various functions.

Such a treatise must show, that in order to achieve good results it is imperative to depart from the mechanical methods of the day, which deal with the material and not the ideal factors in art; which absorb the consciousness of the singer in the process, instead of in the purpose, and serve to develop the lower instead of the higher faculties.

It is these last — in which "musical ideation" is included — that should take the lead, instead of being relegated to a secondary place; otherwise the relation of master and servant, which properly exists between mind and body, ceases to assert itself, and the singer falls to the level of his own machine. It behooves us, therefore, to consider which are the faculties that should be cultivated independently of the physical organs of sound.

In "The Philosophy of Singing" I

have already entered into this subject; but since a riper experience has, as I believe, brought me into closer touch with truth, I hope to be able in the course of this treatise to explain more clearly and render more practical some of the theories I advanced in my previous work. I shall also correct some errors of judgment formed in consequence of having accepted as scientific truth the conclusions of certain investigators regarding the vocal mechanism. Since that time, and after a more exhaustive study of the subject, those conclusions have proved untenable.

When scientists differ from one another as widely as they do, respecting the functions of certain parts of the vocal mechanism, and that on some of the most crucial points, one is forced to conclude that no valid proofs of their theories can be furnished on either side; for, where proof is given, all discussion

must cease, as difference of opinion melts away before established facts. All one can do, therefore, under existing circumstances, is to take into respectful consideration the different current theories, put them to the test by intelligent experimenting, and adopt the one which seems to be the most convincing.

It is in view of this lack of finality respecting the physical facts of vocal mechanism that I have carefully avoided touching on the physiology of tone production, except here and there, and in tentative and suggestive ways.

I am aware that I have indulged in frequent repetition, but it has been done with malice prepense, for I have learned by experience that the only way to make a lasting impression is by constant iteration.

I hesitated long before offering to the public the theories set forth in this

little book, because they seemed to me so obvious that I thought everyone must have made the same observations and reached the same conclusions as myself. As time went on, however, and as I could find no one who had considered the matter on these particular lines, or who had thought of applying to art the natural laws which certainly must be recognized by all thoughtful and observant people in the simple everyday acts of life, I was emboldened to have my say. If I shall have succeeded in putting the singer into a better and more consistent relation with his own voice, my task will not have been undertaken in vain. If I shall have shown that to cultivate one's own voice means to educate oneself, — that is, to quicken one's own musical perceptions; that to be a "dramatic" singer is to cultivate the power to imagine all the different emotions that can be expressed, with

all their subtle variations of degree; and above all, if I shall have shown that to become master of one's art is, in the first place, to become *master of oneself*, I shall have done what I meant to do.

Chapter II

CONVICTIONS RESULTING FROM EXPERIENCE

AFTER making a close study of the voice in singing, for over a quarter of a century, a study which has included not only the mechanism of tone-production, but also acoustics and psychology — particularly physiological psychology in its relation to the art of singing — the conclusions I have reached are these.

First: That the training of voices today is usually pursued on wrong lines, and the whole theory thereof misunderstood, owing to confusion of cause and effect.

Second: That this misunderstanding and the consequent misdirection of effort are coincident with the application of laryngoscopy to singing *as an art*.

Third: That laryngoscopy, while it has proved invaluable to throat specialists, in enabling them to form intelligent diagnoses of pathological conditions of the vocal organs, has been in many ways misleading to both singers and teachers.

Fourth: That the mechanical training, which has been the direct outcome of an *incomplete* knowledge of the vocal processes, has had the effect of weakening the power of sound-perception, on which singing — as an art — chiefly depends.

Fifth: That the larynx, which is the organ of voice, needs little or no special training, when in its normal condition, to fit it for performing the behests of the singer; that failure on the part of the singer to obtain such sounds as he is capable of conceiving is mainly due to *perverted ideas* respecting the vocal processes and their relation to the singer.

Sixth: That a special training of the

ear, the musical perceptions, and the dramatic faculty — which includes cultivation of the imagination — are the principal desiderata in the education of singers.

Seventh: That the perception of sound can, through education and exercise, be improved to an astounding degree, and that its medium, the ear, can become so sensitive as to recognize the concomitant parts of each sound quite as clearly as the reader perceives the letters c-a-t in the word cat.

Eighth: That this power of sound-analysis, or the power of reducing a vocal sound to its component parts, is easily achieved through the attention being persistently concentrated on sound, as such; on sound as distinct from the physical organs which produce it, or the physical sensations which accompany its production.

Ninth: That as soon as the singer

has reached the point where he can conceive a perfect tone on any vowel or word — and conceive it *as a unit* — he possesses the absolute, if indirect, control of all the vocal processes. He is complete master of the situation. The reason of this is, that having gradually learned to note the different qualities (not causes, mark well!) that go to make up perfect tone, he now is able to demand *intelligently* — with one fiat — a sound which in its completeness brings into play, coöperatively, all the different processes which produce it.

Thus, the intelligent demand for a completed vocal tone must necessarily include its perfect mechanism, inasmuch as the one cannot possibly exist without the other.

Tenth: That aim, or purpose, is the formula through which will rules the physical machine. It is singleness of purpose which constitutes the definite-

ness, the absoluteness of will, as a compelling force; and again, it is fulfilment of purpose which adds strength and impulse to will.

If the reader finds nothing reasonable or logical in the above outlining of my convictions, let him close this little book and proceed no further; but if something of his own experience is herein defined, or even suggested, or if it arouses in him any latent suspicion that he may be on the wrong track, let him read on to the end!

CHAPTER III

VOICE, ITS PURPOSE AND ITS NATURE

VOICE is the means, or instrument of expression, in sound. Its primal purpose is to express the emotions. In this rudimentary aspect it belongs alike to the human and the animal creation; for nearly all animals give utterance to their feelings in sound of one kind or another, and the organ provided for them is as well adapted to their needs, to their impulse for expression as the more complex and exquisitely constructed instrument with which man is endowed.

As the emotions of animals are few and simple, their organs of expression are not adapted to the utterance of a great variety of sounds; but as some animals, more highly organized than others, have

a greater variety of feelings to express, the instruments with which they are provided seem to lend themselves in every case to the larger demand made on them. Thus, the kind of voice with which the creature is endowed seems to depend on his actual need of expression, a fact quite in accordance with the scheme of evolution. "I want," when it relates to some *real* need of being, is always followed in due course by "I have." This is the universal law which underlies all development in the animal, all progress in the human world. In the animal world it manifests itself on the plane of physical development; in man it displays itself on the plane of metaphysics.

The difference between man's instrument of sound and that of the animals, corresponds exactly to the difference between a human being and a beast. Man has ideas to express, besides

emotions, and therefore his organ of sound is so constructed as to enable him to give voice to their symbols in speech. The mechanism of the human voice thus becomes more complex in order to fill the augmented requirements of man in the differentiation of sound. And here we arrive at a deeply significant point in our statement.

With man, evolution in the *organ of sound* ceases. There is no further structural development in the instrument itself. The larynx of the Australian aborigines, for instance, is as perfect a piece of mechanism as that of a Catalani or a Rubini. We see, then, that from the first, the vocal instrument of man is potentially fit to express all the ever-varying depths of feeling, the thoughts, ideas, opinions, and imaginings of man in his highest state of mental development and civilization.

From this fact, I must draw the con-

clusion that my voice to-day is actually a manifestation of *what I am*. If I want only to roar and scream, to express anger or exultation, to demand food, and to count up to five, like the Australian aborigines, my voice will, in effect, be limited to that capacity; but if higher thoughts and feelings crave expression, my voice will respond to the increased demand made on it. In this the voice resembles an instrument; for example, a pianoforte, which responds alike to the humble demands of the child, who thrums out a tune with one finger, and to a Paderewski, who plays the soul into a Chopin fantasia. In each case the instrument yields just what is demanded of it — no more, no less; and the quality of the music depends on the performer.

Now, whether the human voice is to yield words only, or song also, depends on whether the individual back of the voice has music in his soul or not, and

whether some need of his being impels him to voice his emotions in musical sound, or to give vent to them in some other way.

When I say that the capacity to sing "depends" on the musical aspiration or craving of the individual for that form of expression, I allude of course to man in his normal condition. It is true that there are those who declare that their greatest longing is to sing, if only a musical voice had been vouchsafed them; and this fact might at first seem to throw some doubt on the soundness of my theory that there exists a never-failing law of demand and supply between our higher and lower capacity; but, before it can be made a ground for objection it must first be proved that in these cases the declared "longing" is a real *need;* for we are prone to harbor notions respecting what we want, which have root only in the imagination; or,

in other words, we sometimes think we want what we really do not want, and what we often in the long run have to own we are better without. Again, we should have to prove that no pathological condition had intervened, such as we frequently find interrupting the close relationship of the ear to the voice, and thus unfitting the latter for musical expression. Both of these cases would come under the head of abnormal states, and therefore would not weaken my argument, which applies, as I said above, to man in his normal state of being.

It is a notable fact that the real needs of our being rarely take the form of things that we talk about. They are always at first subjective. If I am really impelled to laugh or shout, to weep or sing, I do not say so even to myself, but I laugh, I shout, I weep, I sing. In truth I am barely conscious

of what I want before I hear the effect of my impulse.

Thus, if you admit my premises, you will be ready to agree that all real impulses are the outcome of real needs of our being, and that their physical expression is instinctive.

Now, if we apply this to the subject in hand, we must conclude that the act of singing also is instinctive, and consequently, that the instrument, or vocal mechanism, does not concern the singer any more than the mechanism of the hip, the knee, or the ankle in walking; or the circulation of the blood, or the beating of the heart in living.

It is instinctive, in that the physical act of singing consists in the automatic performance of a series of coördinated movements by the vocal parts, resulting in vocal tone, which tone is intelligently dictated by the mind.

If, then, the physical instrument, voice,

works automatically in producing whatever the ear demands as net result, it follows that, as soon as the singer's musical sense has been thoroughly awakened, he will conceive vocal tone that is beautiful, and he will tolerate no other.

In demanding beautiful tone, he naturally makes the right use of his vocal mechanism whatever it may be; and only mechanism that is correct can furnish beautiful tone. The smallest defect in mechanism would at once be perceived by the sensitive ear, *in the sound itself*, and the recognition thereof would prompt the singer to repeat his mental formula of sound, as he conceives it, again and again, until rewarded by hearing the quality he aims at.

A perfect embodiment of instinctivism is to be found in the "natural singer" so called, or the singer who has never received any instruction. Most of us

have at some time in our lives come across one or more of these phenomena, and have known them to be made the subject of much wonder and speculation. "What an extraordinary thing," people exclaim, "to be able to sing without taking any lessons! How can such a thing be possible? Is it genius? or what is it?" Without delving into back history to trace what part heredity may have played in bringing about either the impulse to sing or the ready automatic response of the vocal organs to that impulse, we say that a natural singer is one who is endowed with an ear susceptible to musical sounds which susceptibility stimulates the impulse to express certain emotions in song; and this is made possible, nay easy, through the simple possession of healthy and normally constructed vocal organs, such as numbers of people have who do not sing at all, for the simple reason

that their ears are not susceptible to music.

Natural singers, broadly speaking, may be divided into two classes, namely, vulgar and refined. The former are quite frequent; we often hear specimens of them at variety entertainments, and sometimes even in the streets; but they do not excite our wonder or admiration. We do not reflect, however, that these humble specimens belong to precisely the same class of phenomena as the superb "natural singer" about whom we rave and marvel, and that the difference between them, as singers, does not lie in the possession of superior vocal organs, nor even in superior skill, but rather in the normal and mental development of the creature, and the degree in which the ear is susceptible to musical sound; or in the keenness of perception that leads them to distinguish between what is beautiful in tone and what is

coarse and rough. In the case of the fine natural singer, the organ of voice responds no better, no more spontaneously than in the vulgar singer; moreover, the instincts are no truer. The only difference between the two classes is that the former demands of himself the *better thing*, because of a finer appreciation of beauty and harmony.

This again points to the fact that artistic singing is not actually the result of training the vocal organs to perform correctly a certain set of motions which go to make up the physical cause of vocal sound; but that it is mainly the result of the artistic *feeling*, *intelligence*, and *temperament* — either innate or cultivated — of the individual who sings; and that the only physical equipment necessary is a normal construction and a normal state of health.

Now, in the same way that there are many people in a normal state of health,

and with perfectly constructed vocal organs, who do not sing at all, because they are not endowed with the musical sense; so there are also many who do possess both musical and artistic feeling who in their turn do not sing, because of an imperfect physical condition. Among the latter we have the type known as singers who are "made but not born"; and of these a large proportion are, I am sorry to say, spoilt in the making!

The reason of this, I hold, is that as soon as a physical disability is recognized — either for what it is, or for what it is not — stress is brought to bear on the mechanism of the voice in order to cure it; and this stress causes the attention of the singer to be so constantly centred in the flesh, that the ideal aspect of singing is gradually weakened and soon lost sight of altogether. It takes but a short time for singers to get into the

habit of regarding muscular adjustments and positions of parts as the only important factors in tone production, and to become utterly oblivious to their own God-given musical impulse or natural conception of musical sound. When this state of things sets in, cause and effect, purpose and process, begin at once to masquerade in each other's garments, to the utter confusion and defeat of artistic endeavor.

I need hardly remind my readers how many young singers of promise go abroad for the purpose of overcoming their natural defects, and return without even a vestige of the good qualities they carried with them. We have daily proof of this fact; the shores between here and Paris are strewn with wrecks of this kind; and yet we remain stubbornly blind to the truth, that the underlying principles of teaching, as commonly interpreted, are false and misleading.

So much so, in fact, that where fine singers exist to-day it is rather in spite of their training than in consequence of it.

In what, then, should the training of an artist primarily consist? We say: in the awakening, educating, and developing of the musical sense, and in fostering the growth of the higher qualities of heart and mind, of taste and judgment, to the fullest extent, without neglecting the common laws of health. It may appear from this that there is no more art in singing than in walking, talking, or any of the common everyday acts which take place without our consideration or concern. And it is in a measure true, but with this difference: the average person accepts his own manner of walking or talking — defective or otherwise — as something peculiar to him, like the nose on his face, and so pays no attention to it; he goes on walking, for instance,

with a stoop, or talking with a twang, an indistinct enunciation, a drawl, or what not, without any attempt at betterment; while the singer who aspires to become an artist aims at a certain result, the idea of which dwells in his mind as an ideal, or goal.

The man who talks with a twang or any other unpleasant quality, may perhaps be handicapped by some physical defect which renders it difficult, if not impossible, for him to speak otherwise. It more frequently happens, however, that it is due to an absence of musical sense, to a dulness of sound-perception, and a consequent failure to distinguish between a beautiful and a disagreeable sound. It is often, however, simply the effect of bad example and habit. Living in the midst of coarse, vulgar people, whose voïces are rough and unmusical, would, in nine cases out of ten, bring about a corresponding rough-

ness or slovenliness of speech in one who was without any physical imperfection, provided he was not endowed with an extra-sensitive ear; for the ear, which is the musical conscience, easily becomes perverted by bad example, and soon ceases to miss that beauty which it has, perhaps, once known and loved.

Let us now suppose a man without physical defect, born and brought up among people whose manner of speech is noisy, rough, and discordant, whose enunciation is thick and indistinct, and whose pronunciation is incorrect. Never having heard anything else, he has fallen naturally into the way of talking like the rest. Let us go on supposing that he is suddenly transplanted into the midst of cultivated people, where he hears musical voices and refined speech. If his ear is at all sensitive he is at once struck with the difference between that which he now hears and

what he has been accustomed to hear in the past; he feels the beauty of it; it pleases his ear. His will is stimulated; he seeks to modulate his voice as the others do, and before long he learns to talk like a cultivated man instead of a clown. Here we have an instance of the "dormant ideal" awakened by suggestion or example, which is likewise the germ of the artistic quality, representing as it does, excellence through control, acquired in consequence of aspiration toward beauty and perfection. Of course where there exists no latent perception of beauty, example is powerless to effect a change; for without a sense of beauty there is nothing to stimulate the will.

This illustration and argument hold good equally in their application to singing. The crudest voice can be cultivated and refined by the singer's constantly hearing what is good, provided he has somewhere hidden away in the

depths of his nature an aspiration toward beauty, a desire for perfection. Nor is this to be confused with mere imitation; for we have here a worthy aim substituted for either an unworthy one or no aim at all. The result is, if you please, an imitation of the better thing; but it has something back of it which dignifies it and lifts it out of the ranks of mere mimicry onto the plane of aspiration.

CHAPTER IV

THE LARYNGOLOGIST AND THE SINGER

WITHIN the last quarter of a century great activity has been shown in the investigation of the physiological laws governing tone-production, with the result that a great deal more is known to-day than ever before with regard to the why and the wherefore of certain bad qualities of sound, resulting either from faulty teaching, from pathological conditions (for which bad instruction may or may not be answerable), and for inherent faults which cannot be traced to any known cause, but which may fairly be described as "original sin"! If you were to ask whether singing, as an art, has been benefited by this increase of knowledge, I should be forced to answer

without hesitation, "Certainly not!" On the contrary, I should have to own that, while we now have a larger number than ever of singers who do not rise above mediocrity, we can boast of only a very small group of true artists in the real sense of the word — artists who are both fewer than, and according to reliable authorities, not equal in excellence to, the celebrated singers of the first half of the last century.

Moreover, we find that the average singer of to-day is lacking in that "charm" which often makes the singing of an untrained amateur most pleasing within certain limits.

Among those who have devoted themselves for years to the art of singing, and who are, in many cases, already launched as public performers, we find a large average of dull, lifeless, and unsteady voices, without color or warmth, devoid of expressiveness, with faulty

intonation, little or no sustaining power, an indistinct and incorrect enunciation, and a general effect of constraint.

This state of things is, I regret to say, the rule and not the exception. Some of these average singers, however, have their admirers, and succeed in making a professional career, though, perhaps, rather by virtue of a pleasing personality than by the actual quality of their singing. The audience, it is true, does not always know the difference, and thus do the unskilled thrive on the ignorance of the public.

It is an indisputable fact, however, that the advance in knowledge of vocal mechanism has not brought about a corresponding advance in the art of singing. Now, why is this? Because this increased knowledge is only of the physical instrument of sound, and does not include the singer, nor yet the singing. The laryngologist in his studies

and experiments naturally becomes absorbed in the wonderful mechanism of the vocal organ, and is apt to lose sight of the fact that those very physical processes which, viewed in his laryngoscopic mirror, represent to him the *cause* of voice are actually the *effect* of something else back of them, — to wit, the musical intuition and the will of the singer; and that the real productive cause of voice is the singer's fiat. The organ which the laryngologist sees reflected in his mirror is simply the plastic instrument which yields one kind of mechanism rather than another in response to the singer's demand for one quality of sound rather than another. It is therefore the singer's appreciation of the various qualities of sound that is the chief thing, the thing of vital importance in acquiring the art of singing, inasmuch as it is sound-perception, reacting on sound-conception, which con-

trols and coördinates that mechanism of muscles and ligaments, which the laryngologist has under contemplation.

If any proof be needed to bear out the above statement, we have only to hear the speaking voice of a deaf-mute who has been taught "visible speech" to realize how utterly unmusical is voice-production based only on an understanding of the mechanism of sound. Therefore, while we cannot be too grateful to the laryngologist for his valuable contributions to science, and while we await with deep interest each new discovery that he may add to the present incomplete mosaic of facts, we see very plainly that the premature attempt to draw inferences of practical value to the singer from insufficient data has led to a sad confusion of cause and effect.

The real practical value of laryngology is felt mainly by throat specialists, who by means of it are able to diagnose

pathological conditions of the vocal organs and pass judgment upon the question whether singing under certain conditions may be harmful or not; but, to the singer, as such, I repeat, it is of no value whatever. On the contrary, the theories that have been projected in consequence of the revelations of the laryngoscope concerning the actions of the vocal muscles in phonation are scarcely to be relied on, because it is well-nigh impossible for a subject under examination to produce a natural sound with a mirror in the throat.

As it is, the inferences drawn from such facts as have been already collated differ so widely and are so contradictory that, after reading three or four different treatises on voice-mechanism by leading authorities, one closes the last with a feeling akin to despair at the sad consciousness of being farther away than ever from any conclusive evidence. No

one will deny, however, that the study of vocal physiology is also interesting to the singer, notwithstanding the fact that we do not admit that it has a place in the art of singing.

Like the manufacturer, whose only concern is the quality of the goods produced, and not the different motions of the machinery which produces them, the singer's first and last interest is the quality of sound produced, and not the various actions of the intrinsic and extrinsic muscles of the vocal organs. How can it possibly advantage the singer's voice to know how the thyroid, the cricoid, the arytenoids, and the epiglottis are related to each other, or what the specific function of each of these may be?

For teachers, on the other hand, it is well to know as much as possible about the organ itself, because such knowledge is often useful in locating faults of tone-

production as well as in devising exercises to counteract bad habits.

But for me, the singer, my only concern is my voice as sound or effect; my voice as related to my ear and my will; my voice and I, as we act together.

CHAPTER V

THE REAL AND THE UNREAL PERCEPTION

ONE of the most unprofitable tasks ever undertaken by either teacher or singer is that of seeking to identify any particular quality of sound — faulty or otherwise — with its actual mechanism. Even when a teacher has possessed himself of all that is known of the various ways in which the physical processes of voice work, either in defeating correct tone-production by interfering with each other, or in promoting the emission of perfect tone by absolute agreement and synchronous action, he can never hope to know positively what is taking place in the vocal apparatus during tone-production.

And even if he be endowed with remarkable intuitions and should happen

to trace a certain defect in tone to the peculiar adjustments or contortions of the parts involved therein, he has achieved nothing more than a brilliant diagnosis; he is simply a pathologist and not a physician; he can only explain the cause of the trouble, but he cannot cure it. Whatever remedy he prescribes, even on a basis of the most intelligent diagnosis, must be more or less tentative, if he be worthy of his vocation and not a charlatan.

If we could either see or tell positively what we are actually doing when we sing, we should feel, at least, the same confidence in our power to obtain directly from our vocal organs the particular mechanism we desire as does a pianist or a violinist, whose instrument is more or less under his direct supervision and control. But the truth is, we do not and cannot know what mechanism we are actually using when we sing.

We may mean to use either our breathing or our vocal apparatus in a certain way; we may suppose that we are so using them; but it is impossible to be absolutely sure that we are really doing what we intend.

Our only way of knowing whether the mechanism we are using is good or bad is through the *effect* of the sound itself when it reaches our ear, and while our approval of a certain tone brings us the conviction that its mechanism must be correct, still we cannot tell what that mechanism actually was, nor whether it was in accordance with our intention or not. This fact, which, I think, no one will doubt or deny, opens up to the logical mind an enormous vista of possible discrepancies or disagreements between theories of correct mechanism and their corresponding qualities of sound.

The teacher, for instance, believes that certain muscular adjustments occa-

sion a particular quality of tone, and directs his pupil accordingly; but if the tone produced proves to be not what he desired, he cannot tell whether it was because the singer failed to carry out his directions or because he did carry them out.

I have known some curious instances of teachers who, in endeavoring to obtain from their pupils a particular kind of tone, insisted on their taking and maintaining a certain position of the larynx which actually led to results diametrically opposite; and far from perceiving that the disappointing effect of the voice was due to the misleading directions given, they continued to insist, more and more strenuously, on the same practice.

One of these cases that came to my knowledge occurred in Paris a few years ago. The teacher was one who had been a famous singer in his day; one of the old school, who did not know how

singing was done, but who nevertheless, or perhaps therefore, was a great singer.

When, with the waning of his vocal powers, he took up teaching as a profession, he doubtless thought it expedient to acquaint himself with some of the theories extant respecting the mechanism of tone-production; and these same theories, as it happened, had but little to do with the beautiful quality of tone which he, during his public career as a singer, had been in the habit of using.

The pupil was a young American girl with both voice and talent. The teacher directed her to breathe thus and so, and to hold her larynx in such and such a position. She worked hard to carry out his wishes. The result, however, was a steady deterioration of voice, and the harder she tried to do exactly as he told her, the poorer grew the quality of her tone. One day, while the teacher was occupied with an unruly

window shade, she sang an arpeggio at random and without attempting to observe the usual rules. The teacher turned suddenly and cried with enthusiasm, "*Ah, voilà!*" He had for the first time heard her sing with the tone he desired, and that was only when she threw to the winds, or utterly ignored, his theories of tone-mechanism! Now the moral is this: Had Signor —— conveyed to the young student simply his idea of tone instead of his theory of mechanism, all would have been well, and the young singer might have improved. Had he contented himself with letting her hear his voice, by way of example, instead of instructing her what to do with her vocal muscles, she would have had something positive to tie to, and, as her ear was sensitive to musical sounds, she would soon have perceived in what the beauty and balance of his voice consisted. But even though

he did occasionally sing tones and phrases to her, by way of illustration, he rendered the effect of his singing null and void by insisting on her using her vocal organs in a way utterly at cross purposes with the quality of sound he was trying to obtain from her.

We have used this illustration because it is typical, and because the harm done in this particular case by working through the wrong medium of voice-control is being daily and hourly multiplied by even the most intelligent and conscientious of teachers in every part of the musical world; and it must continue so to be until a truer light is thrown on the subject and until a different view is generally accepted with regard to the real controlling-power of voice and the different phases in which the education of a singer should be worked out. We must teach in accordance with that psychological law which makes it neces-

sary for us to know *what correct tone is in its essentials*, before we can at one fiat demand of ourselves a completely balanced and perfected vocal sound.

The one and only common ground on which teacher and pupil can always meet and thoroughly understand each other is that of *the sound itself;* for the uttered sound is the unit that is made up of all the divers processes which are either under dispute or open to question; and a given sound remains just what it is in quality and effect, regardless of the different theories of how it is produced. It is the one common point of recognition between pupil and teacher; the one intelligible argument, and consequently, the one and only medium through which both teacher and pupil can work safely and with profit.

In making this plea for a direct appeal to the ear and the musical perceptions of the singer, and the stimulating thereby

the correct instinct in producing tone, I have in mind all singers who are by nature properly equipped for acquiring the art of singing. The only exceptions that I would make are those whose *fixed ideas* regarding the mechanism of tone are false and misleading. As such victims of bad training have mostly established the habit of obtaining tone through a mechanical formula, where that formula is physiologically incorrect, it often becomes necessary to fight the habit on its own ground, to uproot the fixed idea and substitute therefor the correct theory of vocal mechanism. In such cases we also advise the teacher to prescribe some vocal gymnastics especially designed to bring about neutrality or passivity in the refractory parts, as the "flesh" is apt to get ahead of the new and correct mental formula, causing much doubt and discouragement in the singer till it is subdued.

Let it be well understood, however, that the substitution of the correct idea of vocal mechanism for a false one will only remove an obstacle in the way of the singer, and that the gymnastics will only bring the parts to a state of obedience, but that these two measures will not suffice to change the defective tone; there is only one thing for that, and it is, *perceiving the particular modification of tone which represents the improved mechanism.* Only when the singer fully appreciates the difference between the one quality of tone and the other will the correct mechanism prevail. In other words, as I have repeatedly said before, the only language in which vocal mechanism can be effectually described to the singer is that of vocal sound itself.

THE real and only power that rules the art of singing is *the perception of sound.* We have striking instances of this in simple every-day occurrences with which we are all familiar.

Take, for example, the human reproduction of such sounds as the mewing of a cat, the barking of a dog, the cawing of a rook, the bleating of a lamb, the crowing of a cock, and numerous other sounds quite unnatural to the human voice, but which we often hear young people reproducing to perfection. Yet, in order to do so, the vocal mechanism has to go through some wonderful manœuvres, many of them in their way resembling extraordinary acrobatic feats.

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Now, what power is it that makes these unusual vocal mechanisms possible? Simply the perception of the peculiar characteristics of all these different sounds. A brain-impression of a certain kind of sound is received, and the will to reproduce it compels the various mechanisms to conform to it, even though in order to do so these same mechanisms have — metaphorically speaking — to stand on their heads, or turn themselves inside out.

Other instances are to be found among a certain class of performers to be met with frequently at variety entertainments. I mean those who reproduce, without artificial aid, the tones of all kinds of musical instruments, stringed, brass, and wood-wind, in addition to every variety of human voice male and female, high and low, — the quavering tones of an old man in contrast to the robust tones of a Salvini, or the voice

of a little child; and again voices with strange peculiarities, the result, perhaps, of some abnormal conformation, and also some curious mannerisms in speech.

These reproductions of sounds so foreign to the normal scope of the human voice, and outside of its supposed limits, are not, as many believe, made possible only by some peculiar construction of the vocal organs. The only necessary quality in the apparatus itself is that of flexibility; all the rest is due purely to the fine appreciation of all the different qualities and degrees of sound, separately and in combination.

It is this rare analytical faculty of the ear which makes it possible for the performer to conceive correctly the tones to be reproduced, and it is this tone-concept that guides and coördinates the vocal mediums of expression.

This particular power of sound-analysis is to a great extent natural, though in

every case it is largely developed by practice.

If you ask one of these performers how he came to adopt his strange profession, he will tell you that he used, as a boy, to take pleasure in noticing the different cries of animals and birds, and later of different instruments and voices; that he found he could reproduce many of them without any difficulty; that it became a delight to acquire those that did not come easy at first; and that, little by little, he was able to reproduce any sound he wished. If you ask him *how* he does it, he will look at you blankly and reply, "I don't know." If you cross-question him about the mechanism involved in these various sounds, you will soon discover that he never thought about it at all; that, in fact, he knows no more about a glottis, or a resonator, than he does about a possible fourth dimension!

This only goes to show that, while the conception of the tone is due to his rare perception of the finest shades of quality and color in sound, the act of expressing the sounds themselves is purely instinctive. He does the right thing to accomplish his purpose without knowing what that right thing is; and his only conscious act is to *will to hear from himself* at each particular time the sound he has in his mind.

That being so, if we apply the same law to singing we shall have to admit that the only conscious part we should play in singing, and consequently, the only thing for which we are responsible, is the idea, or concept, which we form of the tone, the trill, the roulade, or the phrase we mean to sing. The one thing that properly concerns us is: How do we want it to sound? And the medium, or instrumentality, by which we obtain that sound is cer-

tainly not a subject for our consideration.

It is a pity we do not use our instincts as we might, because in failing to do so we are gradually parting with one of the most useful of our possessions. It is true that the intellectual faculty which belongs to man transcends animal instinct; but as long as we are of this earth, earthy, and until our intellect shall have grown far more comprehensive than it is at present, we cannot afford to regard instinct as wholly obsolete.

Man is to-day an intellectual creature, plus an animal; but as the animal is still there, it were well for us to use our intellect in addition to, rather than as a substitute for, instinct.

Under the present conditions — seeing that we are neither wholly animal nor wholly intellectual — we run the risk of "falling to the ground between two

stools"; for we are, through disuse, precipitating the decadence of that rudimentary intelligence which has since the beginning of animal creation so efficiently served its purpose, while our higher intelligence is not yet sufficiently developed to be all in all to us. In our present state of mental growth it would seem wiser to allow intellect to rule instinct, and not to take the place of it; to retain instinct in its service, relegating to it the carrying out of its purpose, and not to interfere with work to which it is not suited.

Instinct plays perfectly into the hands of sound-perception, which is the intelligent medium in singing; and with sound-perception as master, and instinct as servant, nothing can go wrong.

When this fact is fully established in our minds, and when instructors apply it in their teaching and students apply it in their practice, there will

be a good crop of singers to make our souls rejoice!

Another significant illustration of the ruling power of sound-perception is to be found in the fact that most young singers are able to effect a complete change in the quality of their tone (which means also in their production) after hearing some distinguished public singer who has made an impression on them. I have heard a light soprano, with apparently very limited powers, suddenly take on an ample, resonant quality of tone, full of color and vitality, the day after hearing Lehmann in the role of Isolde; and another singer with a dull, heavy, and hard voice as suddenly achieve flexibility and a pure, sympathetic tone after listening to Melba in "Lucia"; and I could cite dozens of similar instances if it were necessary. Of course, the change thus effected in the voice of a singer is not permanent. It must neces-

sarily be only a temporary thing, because the "mental impression" received of the sound is only ephemeral. It grows fainter day by day, and as the singer is constantly hearing other voices, the memory of the better sound soon dies out altogether, while the old habits once more assert themselves. If, however, it were possible for the singer to remain during a long period under the influence of the sound by which he had been so strongly impressed, the continuity of the new sound-perception would certainly prevail in due time and cause new habits to be formed in the vocal processes themselves. It is not to be supposed from this that anybody and everybody who has a voice and who hears a fine singer will immediately be able to sing like him, for it depends on the readiness of the person to *receive the impression* of the better sound, as, unless the singer is alive to it, and

recognizes it as something which satisfies him in a way that his own habitual tone does not, his will is not stimulated to new impulse.

Yet another illustration of the ruling power of sound-perception, when it, and no other force, is allowed to prevail, is to be found in the fact that an unskilled singer who is musical enough to read vocal music at sight with readiness will, when called upon to sing a song or aria at first sight, do so with perfect tone-production, and consequently with perfect ease, mostly also with great expressiveness.

Now let the same singer take this identical song and study it, and you will soon find that the voice loses steadily in beauty and vitality as the singer becomes better acquainted with the song, and that all expressiveness soon vanishes completely. You will also notice that all the inherent faults in tone-production,

which were held in abeyance during the sight reading, now reassert themselves in full force.

The point and the interesting feature of this is, that the reason why the singer sang better than he knew how while reading at sight was simply that the song was entirely new to him, and he was therefore compelled to rivet his attention on the musical intervals as they followed one another in quick succession in conjunction with the words which belonged to them, and there was no time for the brain to work at anything else.

Thus, perfect concentration on sound, as such, was forcibly brought about by the exigency of the occasion, with the result that the entire mechanism of voice, in all its ramifications, was dominated and controlled by tone-perception.

As a direct outcome of this, all the habitual faults were prevented from in-

terfering with perfect ease and beauty of expression. As soon, however, as familiarity with the music permitted the liberation of a certain amount of consciousness from the musical intervals, the mind returned to its old haunts — to wit, the physical location of tones and words — and the body resumed its old tricks.

I have had recently a very striking instance of this curious fact in my own personal experience as a teacher. A young singer, who had worked very hard, while abroad, to acquire some bad habits, found it impossible to sing in tune. This was not because of a defective ear, her sense of musical pitch being correct and her musical perceptions fairly well developed, but because of a fatal mistake which she had been allowed to fall into; namely, that it was necessary to hold the tongue in certain positions in order to obtain certain

vocal sounds. The tongue, resenting this interference, had become more and more unruly, until finally it was in a complete state of anarchy, actively defeating at every turn the intention of the singer by tuning the resonator to a different pitch from that demanded by the prime tone. The result was what you might expect to hear in a duet in unison between a violoncello and a flute, the flute being pitched a quarter of a tone higher than the 'cello!

The singer, while fully appreciating the discordant sound she produced, seemed powerless to change it. The truth was that her mischievous tongue got ahead of her on every note she sang.

What was to be done? Explanations, directions, examples, seemed useless; — her mind had abdicated, and the tongue was master of the situation!

I knew that there was only one thing

which could effect a change, and that was, absolute concentration in the idea of the completed vocal sound as it is *heard*, not as it is *made*. But the difficulty was, I could not obtain from my singer the proper degree of concentration. At last, I bethought me to have recourse to sight-singing; and fortunately she was musical enough to make this experiment possible. So I placed before her a song which was new to her, and to my great satisfaction and her own, she sang it faultlessly in tune from beginning to end.

In testing her afterwards in exercises she again lost all control of pitch. So I returned to the sight-singing with the determination to keep her at it until the obstinately impetuous tongue should be utterly subdued and cease to make the series of inconsequent movements which work so fatally at cross-purposes with pitch. Before long I found that

the habit of anticipating every tone with a tongue movement was sufficiently broken to permit the correct mental conception of tone to take the initiative in production, and subsequent results have certainly proved that the expedient was a wise one and founded on true principles.

This illustration, which certainly bears out my theory of the absolute control exercised by sound-perception on the entire vocal apparatus, is not exaggerated one iota; it is a simple fact. Similar cases have doubtless occurred in other people's experience, though, perhaps, without the principles involved therein being recognized or considered.

The above illustration, and all that I have said preceding it, point to the fact that the power of concentration is one of the most valuable, nay necessary, faculties for the singer to acquire, seeing that by the attention being concentrated

on the musical intervals, the singer is able to overcome even the most confirmed habits of bad mechanism.

The fact that we are able to bestow our attention on more than one thing at a time — a power in which we transcend our humble ancestors, the animals pure and simple — furnishes a proof of our fuller, richer, and more complex mental development, but does not aid our expression in art, nor, in fact, in anything where a coördinated action of physical parts is called into play to carry out a particular fiat of the will.

In this, animals and human creatures whose intellect is of a rudimentary order have decidedly the advantage over us, for they have not to overcome the dangerous tendency toward diffusion of mental energy which besets us.

With them, the relation between the will and the physical instrumentality is simple and direct; to will is to obtain,

as far as the actual possibilities of their organs will permit. With us it is otherwise. We have infinite possibilities which we never reach because we do not demand their fulfilment in the same way and with the concentrated purpose that the animal does; that is, with undivided attention to *one thing at a time*.

The eminent psychologist, Sir William Hamilton, says: "The greater the number of objects among which the attention of the mind is distributed, the feebler and less distinct will be its cognizance of each. Consciousness will thus be at its maximum of intensity when attention is concentrated on a single object."

There is, of course, nothing new in this statement, the truth of which is obvious; but I take pains to call the singer's attention to it simply because the power to concentrate the mind on

one thing at a time is not generally recognized as an important factor in singing, as a fine art.

Nevertheless, if I have succeeded in showing that the simple idea of the particular sound desired is the sole formula through which the will should act to the exclusion of every physical process or sensation, it will be admitted that the student must train his mind to work in that way.

Most people, especially young people, find this difficult, and many singers are very much handicapped in this respect because of mechanical training which has drawn their attention constantly to their physical apparatus, but the power can and must be acquired if the best results are the aspiration of the singer.

We have no fixed rules to lay down for the practice of concentration, but we exhort each student to find his own

best way of accomplishing it as a part of his mental equipment as an artist.

First, he must learn to concentrate his thought on anything he pleases, and then he will have no difficulty in centring his attention in the right way in singing; to wit, on the sound itself as it is sensed by the ear, which is, we repeat, the absolute ruling and motive power of the entire instrumentality of singing.

CHAPTER VII

I AM LORD OF MY BODY

IF I have a natural conception of a beautiful sound, and know nothing of the processes involved in producing it, I have an immense advantage over the physiologist or the mechanician, in that I have singleness of purpose, which is the equivalent of concentrated energy. Anyone who has ever watched a cat leap from a wall to the branch of a tree where a coveted bird is resting can readily appreciate the effectiveness of singleness of purpose. It is the aiming straight for a given goal, seeing nothing else but that goal, which coördinates to perfection all those delicate muscular processes involved in that flying leap, as well as the perfect balance at the end of it. Now, if you or I were attempting

that kind of a jump, we should probably be calculating the distance between the wall and the branch, and the particular impetus of the body required, with the result that we should get a tumble! Our power of imagination is our stumbling-block at such times. The capacity to picture ourselves as missing the branch if we do not aim straight, or to think that this may be a better way to poise the body than that, is a decided hindrance to adroitness of motion, in that it divides our consciousness, which should be concentrated in pure *aim*. Again, if pure aim, or singleness of purpose, coördinates our muscular and nervous organisms, hesitancy and indecision must have the contrary effect. Fear, doubt, and misgiving are fatal to achievement. But take heart! For what the cat accomplishes by instinct, because it is just a cat, both you and I can also achieve as soon as we realize that the mental

faculties which transcend feline nature in such acts of skill are, during the act, not called into play. That it is not a question of calculating distance, of applying the law of gravitation, or of balance, nor yet of understanding the mechanism of the parts employed, but simply that I, lord of my body, learn to mind my own business, which is, to demand autocratically the thing I want, whether it be to land on the branch of a tree, or to vocalize a scale, secure in the conviction that I shall get what I demand, without interference or direction of mine, because a wonderful piece of machinery has been fashioned by nature to that end.

Just think for a moment how readily we place our confidence in instruments fashioned by the hand of man! We have no doubt that a loom will weave for us whatever kind of cloth we choose; we are sure that when we strike the

keys of a pianoforte its mechanism will yield us the notes we have struck. It never occurs to us to assist, to interfere with, or even to notice the mechanism of the piano while we play. We just play, that is all! Why do we not feel equal confidence in our vocal instrument which is so much finer, so much more perfect a piece of mechanism? Moreover, one would think that in view of the very complexity of the instrument itself we should appreciate the utter hopelessness of tampering with any part or parts of its mechanism, as to attempt to aid one of the processes might result in obstructing some other. Were we to use our intelligence and reason to better purpose, we should see plainly that where any given result is to be produced by a coördination of different processes, there must be, in the first place, neutrality or passivity in the processes to be coördinated, as exem-

plified in the pianoforte, or any other instrument.

Surely, the fact that my instrument and I are bound together in one organism should not lead me astray. The fact that it vibrates to my thoughts instead of to my fingers should not be confusing to my enlightened mind. It is only a question of a different application of motive power, that is all. We have readily adapted ourselves to the varying scale of motors that progressive civilization has, in its different stages, afforded us, from wind, water, and horse-power to steam and electricity; why not learn the true nature and force of that mightiest of all motive powers, will, the only motor which acts so swiftly that will and the act—cause and effect—seem one!

I am lord of my body and not its instructor; and if I know that it can, nay, that it must, yield me what I ask, I do not even watch it; I do not concern

myself about it at all, but rest in the security that to will a thing which my body is fitted for is to obtain it.

In this way, I, lord of my body, acquire repose; fear of failure no longer holds me enslaved; for, to will and to have become a unit in my mind. And therein lies the secret of that mysterious but potent quality to which we are so alive in the public performer, which we call, for want of a better name, "magnetism." It is belief in self. My absolute confidence that I shall achieve what I attempt inspires my audience with such a delightful sense of security, and magnifies the actual merit of my singing by conjuring up in the mind a belief in unlimited possibilities yet to be realized!

To sum up, it is, first, my positive knowledge of what I want, in terms of effect, not cause; second, my absoluteness in demanding what I want of my

neutral instrument; third, my perfect confidence that I shall get what I want, which combined constitute my mastery in art, and my power to hold my audience.

Chapter VIII

SCIENCE AS RELATED TO ART

I HAVE already said in a preceding chapter that to know in detail how sound is produced has little or nothing to do with singing, and that such knowledge cannot, in the smallest degree, facilitate it as an art. That therefore it would be illogical to base the education of singers on a theory of vocal mechanism,—even were all the subtle ramifications thereof thoroughly understood,—because it would result in the singer's attention being drawn to the means instead of the end, to the cause instead of the effect, to the process instead of the purpose.

The study of causes belongs to science and not to art; and though we may be able to do a thing and also to know how

it is done, knowing is not doing, and a scientist is not an artist, though an artist may become also a scientist.

The highest type of an artist, in fact, is one who has arrived naturally at a perception of science in art; who, possessed by an ideal, has made that his only aim, working tentatively and experimentally toward it, under the guidance of his own intuitions and instincts, supplemented by occasional examples; who, having, at last, through practice attained to perfect skill, perceives the laws of action in the consummated act. Such a one speedily overreaches his first ideal, which gradually undergoes a series of subtle metamorphoses in the direction of greater nobility, dignity, and spirituality. Such artists are rare indeed; but where such a one is found, he is a king among kings! The world bows down before him. And why? Because in a world where some can do,

but do not know, and others know, but cannot do, he represents both knowledge and power—the great unit of perfection!

Science, however, is not the way, it is simply the fact, the fixed quantity. The way is variable and relative to the person who pursues it. It may be long or short, straight or crooked, easy or laborious, according to the mental, moral, or physical equipment of the individual. Therefore the science, or recognized laws which underlie art, should not be confounded with the means of attaining skill therein. The two things are not homogeneous, nor can there be any harmonious relation between them until skill is attained and art also has become a fact.

Every art student should bear in mind the following simple truths:

1. That art is the ideal at which he is aiming.

2. That the attainment of art depends on his concentrated energy and effort, guided by his own intelligence, and vitalized by his own enthusiasm and aspiration.

3. That not until he has, by the use of these powers, attained to perfect mastery, not until he has caught up with his ideal, in fact, has he a right to be called an artist. Now, it rests with the individual, whether at this point he becomes a scientist also or not; it depends on his mental equipment, on the particular character of his intellect, — whether or not he has the faculty for close and accurate observation, for collating facts, and for deductive reasoning, but above all, whether he has inborn the passion for knowing why. It is most common for people to content themselves with actual achievement without occupying their thoughts with speculations about the how, the why, or

the wherefore. Nor does this attitude of mind stultify their art, as such. It simply stamps the artist as an individual. It is only that the larger-souled man who wonders and who delights in recognizing the marvellous unity of natural law must surely bear within him a more beautiful, a higher, a nobler ideal of art than he who takes all for granted and simply triumphs in achievement.

But every state of mind has its own proper period, and the time for seeking to penetrate the mysteries of natural law is not when we are pursuing the road to art. It is the ideal art which should at that time engross the whole of our attention. As soon as we have attained to it, we may analyze it and see of what stuff it is made.

CHAPTER IX

THE IDEAL AS A PRACTICAL FACTOR IN ART

WE are apt to regard our ideal in art as something so far off, so unattainable that we do not associate it with our daily work. The practical side appears to us as something, if not opposed to the ideal, at least so foreign to it that the two cannot subsist together. We regard it as our distant goal, to be reached after the practical part of our work is done. We place it at the top of the ladder up which we are to climb, and it never occurs to us that every rung of that ladder should in its turn hold for us an ideal of its own; that the ideal on top is simply the aggregate, or sum total, of the lesser ideals below. We confuse the practical with the material, and

make a prosaic drudgery out of that which should be aspiration in action.

It is this segregation of our ideal which so frequently makes the artist stop short at the mere technician. The distant end is forgotten or overlaid in the present means. Thus, the acquiring of a correct tone-production has been identified with a mechanical drill, the sole aim of which is to develop physically the parts of the instrument, — voice, — while the chief essential in the singer's education has been left out, to wit, the perception of the ideal tone itself, as a sensation of the ear and without reference to the processes by which it is produced.

We should all agree that to practise shooting without a visible mark would be folly; and yet it does not appear to be generally recognized that unless a singer has the ideal sound ever present in his mind, he is aiming at nothing,

he is working in the dark, for he does not really know what it is that he wants.

It is the ear, then, I repeat, that in the first instance should be trained, for is not the ear to the singer what the eye is to the painter and also to the marksman? Is it not the ear that governs the entire realm of sound, and are not the vocal processes merely its efficient and obedient subjects?

It is indeed strange that this fact, obvious as it is, should be so generally ignored; yet it is an undeniable truth that nine singers out of ten know sound principally as a physical, or muscular sensation. In other words, they perceive in it the means and not the end, being so engrossed by the means or physical motions employed in the production of voice that the tone itself cannot draw their attention away from the body which produces it. Thus, the quality of the sound, which, in the early stages

of study, is the only thing of vital importance to the singer, is actually the only thing which is slighted.

As a matter of fact, the very judgment of the performances of others is frequently founded on the observation of certain technical details. It is the adherence or non-adherence to mechanical laws, which young singers have been taught to observe, that engages their attention, instead of the effect of the singing as a whole, its beauty or expressiveness.

As an illustration of this, I remember the following incident. A singer appeared for the first time at one of the Boston Symphony concerts. On the day after the Friday rehearsal, at which I was not present, I met a young singer who always attended the Friday performances, and I inquired of her what she thought of Madame ——. "Oh, I did n't like the way she took breath, — she worked the upper part of her chest," was the

reply. "But the voice, was it musical?" I asked. "I don't think she used it the right way," was the answer. "But how did it sound?" insisted I; "what was the general effect of her singing? Was it agreeable, expressive? What was your impression as a whole?" My young friend looked bewildered for a moment, then replied, "Oh, I think I rather liked her; and she was recalled three times!"

The above is a fair sample of the way in which artists are estimated by the younger singers of the day. It would seem that these had been taught to listen with their eyes instead of with their ears.

It is indeed to be deplored that the tendency of the present methods of training is to place the material before the ideal. The student thus becomes involved in a perfect labyrinth of physiological complexities out of which there is no retreat.

In truth, there is no factor in the art of singing so wholly practical as the ideal. It is the very "nib" of it! For, considered as a concept of each tone we utter, the ideal must be with us always, as our immediate aim. It is the axis on which the whole art of singing revolves.

The ideal, therefore, of each sound or group of sounds, considered as a microcosm of a macrocosm, is precisely what the singer should have and hold firmly in his mind at the outset, and what, if he has it not to start with as part of his musical equipment, he must build up, construct for himself, with the aid of his teacher. In this latter case, it may be asked, can this idea or ideal of sound be established only through imitation, repetition, and memory?

We answer: Not necessarily, although imitation is the best starting point where correct example can be furnished; but

it is hardly necessary to point out that where the instructor is unable to furnish a good example, imitation is fatal. Of course, the surest, the best, and the quickest results are obtained by such singers as have been called by nature to their vocation, because the innate feeling for sound must serve them far better than imitation ever could, provided they give themselves up unreservedly to its guidance, for the reason that it is their own ideal, born of their own potentialities; not something from without to be acquired, but something from within to be realized.

Even this innate sense of beauty, however, can be easily perverted by bad example. Like conscience, it can be deadened or rendered inactive; and it is owing partly to this fact that during the last two decades such an imperfect idea of sound has prevailed, that a lack of sensitiveness to real beauty of

tone is to-day the rule rather than the exception.

Now, how is this state of things to be ameliorated? It is obvious that if we no longer feel intuitively what quality of tone we want to utter, we must be brought to a recognition thereof by example, and also be made to understand in what a perfect vocal sound consists; what are its characteristics.

The question then arises, can a perfect vocal sound be correctly described in terms? We say that, in a measure, it can, because it possesses certain characteristics which must invariably be present when the sound is perfect; and where these particular characteristics are present all the other component parts of a perfect vocal sound follow as a natural consequence of the correct lead.

It may be objected that a verbal description of these leading characteristics can only be suggestive and nothing more.

But, even admitting these premises, we all know how important a part suggestion plays in stimulating the imagination, and how by means of it we are often brought to a realization of facts which we had before apparently ignored. Does not the description of a beautiful face call up an image thereof in the mind of the listener or the reader? Of course, this conception excited by suggestion must vary in individuals according to their particular power to conceive beauty, either of form, color, tone, expression, or what not; for it is to the possible ideal of each individual that suggestion appeals; ideals must ever be relative to individuals.

In describing a perfect vocal tone, however, there is something positive to tie to; for we are not dealing with such qualities as are the outcome of those subtle variations in construction of the vocal organs, which constitute

the individuality of voices, but only with certain fundamental qualities which all tones that are correct must have in common, and without which all voices, in spite of a certain subtle charm which they may naturally possess, must necessarily be faulty.

What those qualities are which must invariably be present in perfect tone, I shall endeavor to show in the next chapter.

Chapter X

PERFECT VOCAL SOUND

ALTHOUGH most musical people are able to recognize a perfect vocal sound when they hear it, few, if any, are able to define in what its perfection consists. We frequently hear characterizations of tone, such as: velvety, luscious, silvery, sweet, broad, strong, and full; or harsh, strident, metallic, pinched, thin, and weak; but these characterizations are simply of impressions received from the tone, and not analyses of the sound itself. To such analysis the ear of the average musician has not, as a rule, been educated. And yet, as vocal tone is preëminently compound and not simple, it actually demands analytical study as much as does harmony in its application to musical chords.

The reason for this is that, in addition to its fundamental tone and upper partials, which vocal sound possesses in common with the sound of instruments, it is further differentiated by vowels, and still further complicated by consonants. And in these characteristics it is wholly unlike the sound of any musical instrument.

It is evident, therefore, that voice in singing, being as it is, the most complex of all musical sounds, on account of its entangling alliance with speech, demands both finer perception and closer study than does the sound of any instrument.

Dr. Ireland, in speaking of certain faculties of the mind, says:

"Helmholtz has shown that the sensation of the tone, or quality of a sound, is composed of a series of sensations of the different component parts, — the fundamental sounds and the harmonic sounds, — but the mind

having got into the habit of regarding the whole as a single sound, it becomes extremely difficult to decompose the composite sensation into its constituent parts, that is, to make the harmonic tones heard, so that the mind may recognize that they are distinct sensations, which could be easily distinguished if they occurred in less perfect simultaneity."

And this exposition of Helmholtz, which refers to the sound of musical instruments in general, applies to vocal sound, with even a far broader significance on account of the vowels which introduce a new and ever varying element, which is constantly changing the conditions of sound.

It would seem from this that the analysis and perception of a perfect vocal sound must at best be a complicated affair; yet it is not really so. In fact, if it were, it would be useless to enter into the matter, because, if a clear perception of a vocal sound is to constitute our direct aim in singing, it must be

simple enough to form a unit in the mind; otherwise the immediate purpose of the singer would not be single, and, consequently, there could be no concentrated effort of will.

The leading characteristics of perfect vocal tone can be described in a very few words. They are: exactness or "intuneness" of pitch and distinctness of vowel in unity, and perfect balance between the head vibrations and those of the glottis and lower resonators. Where these characteristics are present, the tone is free from all sounds foreign to the vocalized pitch itself, and every shade of beauty in tone that the singer is capable of conceiving and that his vocal organs can produce will be present also, as a natural consequence of the leading characteristics above cited. All other sound would come under the head of noise, and interfere with or cover the vocal tone.

So much for the sound itself as it is heard; now, how about the singer's impressions in producing it?

To begin with, every tone in the voice, from the highest to the lowest, seems to be initiated in the head independently of the throat, or chest, both of which remain in a state of absolute passivity during that initiation. In fact, it hardly seems to be the product of the flesh at all, but, rather, a vocal idea projected into space, carrying with it sonorous co-vibrations from the glottis as a bee carries honey. Although vocal sound is actually generated in the glottis, the singer senses it in the locality of its final development, the head, so that it seems as though it were not only conceived, but also produced in the head. It is easy to see how this fact has been twisted into all kinds of theories of head production, so-called.

The musical pitch and vowel do not

impress the singer as being two separate processes in different locations or on different levels which must be made to agree, but simply as a mentally selected differentiation of sound uttered in a single impulse.

In singing with words an infinitesimal period is necessarily allotted to the formation of the consonants, or groups of consonants, these being formed by different combinations or relative positions of the lips, tongue, and teeth. But, although these positions, occurring as they do at the beginning and end of syllables, cause a complete interruption of the vocal sound for the time being, the two processes dovetail with each other so perfectly that the sustained vocal sounds in a musical phrase lose nothing of their smooth and legato effect on account of that interruption. The words of a song seem to glide one into the other independently of their

respective vocal sounds while apparently at one with them, the perfect unity of the vocal phrase and the verbal text consisting solely in the non-interference of the one with the other.

The physical sensations accompanying the production of perfect tone are as follows: There seems to be a free and unobstructed passage from head to chest; everything in and about the throat, both above and below, remains quiet and neutral, though ready for flexible motion. The different vowel forms involve no sensation of being shaped or pronounced, the tongue seeming almost to efface itself when it is not forming consonants, which it does with such rapid and flexible motions that, even in this, its presence in the mouth is unobtrusive. Nor does the regulation of breath carry with it any physical sensation, as of resisting or holding back the outflowing stream of air at the chest muscles or diaphragm;

it seems, instead, as if the stream of air were held in check or regulated by the tone itself and by nothing else.

These, then, are the principal impressions and sensations of the singer in producing perfect tone. I believe they will be recognized by all those who have ever sung correctly, and this description may help some of my readers to recall tones long forgotten, by suggesting to them old sensations. Let it be remembered, meanwhile, that I have been describing effects, not causes. Let me also warn the singer against bearing the description of these impressions in mind during the act of singing, as it is meant only to serve as a means of recognition, and not as a rule for obtaining correct sound. This, I repeat, can be accomplished only when the mind of the singer is possessed by the correct idea of the sound itself, in all its entirety, to the exclusion of all else.

Having now attempted to describe the nature of correct tone, as well as the impressions and sensations it produces on the singer, the question arises: what can the singer do to produce such tone? How is he to go about it? First, he must form a definite mental concept of every tone, and that same concept must include the vowel on which it is to be sung. In order to do this he must make himself familiar with all the vowels and their modifications as so many individual sounds, and he must accustom his ear to them so that he can always imagine any one of them instantaneously. This knowledge is not commonly intuitive. It more often has to be acquired. Exactness of pitch, on the other hand, is naturally both appreciated and conceived by any singer who is properly equipped with a musical ear.

As soon as the singer can imagine all the different vowels in their perfection

of clearness, the next thing he must learn to do is mentally to incorporate the vowel in the musical sound, or pitch of the tone. As soon as the pitch is determined, it must, in his mind, already become the vowel on which it is to be sung. The effect being that the vowel is an integral part of the pitch, not a superstructure; and the singer must, in advance, imagine or conceive that effect. Nor is this pitch and vowel in unity a something to be thought and then done; the thinking is the doing, there is nothing else, if we except the mere blind impulse which precipitates it into space.

When whole words are sung instead of vowels only, the pitch and the word must be imagined as a unit precisely as in the case of the pitch and vowel only. When this is done, the consonants fall into line, as it were, and relate themselves correctly to the vocal sounds.

It is, of course, as necessary for the student first to make himself familiar with all the different consonants, and to understand their nature, as it is for him to know the correct sound of every vowel.*

This is the way singers should learn to recognize and to conceive tone that is correct in all its component parts. Such perception leads by a direct road to the identification of correctness with beauty of tone, and, after a little while, the mental formula of the unified pitch and vowel, or pitch and word, will be almost unconscious. It will merge itself into the idea or ideal of the beautiful tone, which is now the singer's immediate aim. This now intelligent aim, in fact, becomes intuitive.

In other words, the singer should, in the early period of his studies, learn the

*A description of the different kinds of consonants will be found in "The Philosophy of Singing," page 116, and the treatment of diphthongs in singing, on page 114.

laws of sound as the child learns the rules of grammar; and, like the child, he also will forget the laws and preserve the correct idea of sound.

This is not really a difficult task for a musical person, it is only a new task, for it is not usual for singers to reflect that a tone which is simply conceived correctly, as musical pitch, cannot be in tune; that vocal sound must also be in tune with itself, that is, the vowel must be tuned to the pitch, or else the tone will not really be in tune at all. But it is the appreciation, — the recognition of this fact, which is an absolute necessity as a starting point for the student who would learn to produce tone that is complete in all its parts. In other words, vocal sound must be conceived, idealized as vocal sound, and not simply as musical sound; and yet, strange to say, you seldom find one who thus conceives it, which is the reason

we seldom, if ever, hear perfect vocal tone.

We frequently hear agreeable tones, as far as musical quality is concerned, but we have, in nine such cases out of ten, to dispense with a clearly defined vowel, as, in order to obtain the musical quality, the singer generally sacrifices, or distorts, the vowel, so that it might be anything but that which it is intended to be.

This fault has been tacitly encouraged by many teachers, owing, I think, to attention having been called by laryngoscopists to the change which takes place in the shape of the vowel forms, to reënforce properly the different pitches of tone. A misunderstanding of this theory in its practical application has been made an excuse for slovenly pronunciation. To alter or distort the sound of the vowel in order to favor the resonance of the tone is working quite in the

wrong direction, — it is robbing Peter to pay Paul.

The theory of altered vowels would not, however, have worked the harm it has done if it had been accompanied with the counterbalancing law that, whatever physiological changes may have to take place to furnish a resonant and musical sound on certain combinations of pitch and vowel, the clearness and distinctness of the vowel sound to the ear must at all costs be maintained.

The acceptance, even by musicians, of incomplete unbalanced vocal tone, must be attributed to a gradual demoralization of the musical conscience in its relation to vocal sound; which demoralization proceeds from the protracted absence of the perfect thing. That the musical ear in a wholly unperverted state craves the tone in which pitch and vowel coincide absolutely was instanced in the old Italian masters, who would not tolerate any jug-

gling with the vowels. It was with these as imperative that every word should be of uncompromising distinctness, as that the tone itself should be correctly pitched and reinforced.

I have so far spoken only of the essentials in producing the perfected vocal sound, — namely, that the singer must in advance know the sound he is to hear as a simultaneous unification of the vowel with pitch, thus effecting the fully developed vocal tone in one fiat without concern for any of the physical processes thereof.

I have said nothing of the subtle variations in tone color, which must respond to the ever-changing dramatic and emotional requirements of singing, nor of the agility of voice in executing quick passages, nor yet of the emphasis of certain words over others, necessary to the declamatory values and the expressive quality of the music, — and

why? Because all these things come under the same head, and are to be achieved in precisely the same way. They will become a part of the artist's aim, a part of his fiat, as soon as he knows in the aggregate what he wants. When he has learned to appreciate the dramatic or expressive requirements of the music he sings, his mental formula naturally becomes a unification of all the different qualities which go to make up his ideal of the particular musical and dramatic demands of the moment. The same applies, of course, to the execution of trills, gruppetti, scales, arpeggios, roulades, and any and every combination of notes in quick succession that can occur in vocal music. The only thing necessary is for the singer to know, in advance, how he wishes the trill, the gruppetto, the scale, the argpeggio, the roulade, etc., to sound. Only, let him remember that he must

know how he wants these quick passages to sound in the aggregate. Thus he must imagine or idealize in advance the sound of the trill, or roulade, as such, rather than the separate notes of which they are made up. It is, in other words, the effect on the ear of the trill, or roulade, which he must mentally foreshadow. If his musical conception is sufficiently fine to allow him to idealize a beautiful trill or roulade, each note that composes these will be perfect in intonation, and the motion thereof will be both smooth and even. Of course, in the rare cases where the idea of absolutely correct and perfect sound is intuitional, it is not necessary to be taught or to know the qualities, as such, of perfect tone. The component parts of the sound already exist in the consciousness, as a unit. In other words, they know the perfect sound without knowing why it is perfect. This is, after all, the state of mind that

the singer, whose knowledge of the constituents of perfect tone is not intuitional, must reach through education and practice.

The mental process of first learning to perceive severally the different component parts of vocal sound, and of afterwards unifying them, may at first seem laborious, but the mind soon grows accustomed to work in that way rather than in any other. The very fact that the whole attention is absorbed in the single purpose of sound, and that the whole realm of physical causation is ignored, facilitates the establishing of the habit through the natural force of concentrated energy. I cannot do better than apply here what Dr. Ireland says in a discussion of unconscious cerebration, so-called.*

"At first, and before the habit is acquired, every act is slow, and we are conscious of

*"The Blot upon the Brain," Chapter 9, page 217. Will W. Ireland.

the effort of deliberation, choice, and volition; by degrees the mind proceeds with less vacillation and uncertainty. At length, the acts become secure and precise; in proportion as this takes place the velocity of the procedure is increased; and, as this acceleration rises, the individual acts drop one by one from our consciousness, as we lose the leaves in retiring farther and farther from the tree; and at last we are only aware of the general state which results from these unconscious operations, as we can at last only perceive the greenness which results from the unperceived leaves."

This is precisely the way the brain works in singing. Even the mental unification of word and tone, after the act has been repeated again and again, takes place as a matter of course, without conscious effort, and it seems as if the tone were uttered without premonition. When the singer reaches this stage he sings "intuitively," in the highest sense, for his intuitions now rest on the solid basis of a series of mental recognitions

of individual facts, that have now merged into one whole, concrete, perception, and this perception acts so instantaneously that it is almost unconscious. Singing under such conditions must be the very embodiment of spontaneity.

I will conclude this attempt to point out the principal features of correct, and, therefore, beautiful tone, by reminding my readers that there are some actions as well as perceptions too fine to be expressed in words; and that, in all crafts, there are some fine touches which cannot be taught by precept, or even by imitation, and which the mind must find out for itself.

Chapter XI

SOMETHING ABOUT TECHNIQUE

NO one can be an artist who has not conquered the technique of his art; which is equivalent to saying that no one can be an artist who has not obtained complete control over his medium of expression or instrumentality.

There are many public performers, both among instrumentalists and singers, who, without having acquired control of their organs, sometimes score successes, but these successes are simply lucky hits, brought about by favorable conditions, and not to be counted on under ordinary circumstances.

It is not at all an uncommon thing for us to be transported with delight at the first hearing of a singer, and to

find ourselves wondering, on some subsequent occasion, how the same person could sing so wretchedly.

Again, we often hear a singer on the operatic stage with fine, free, and resonant voice, perfect intonation, and all the good qualities which belong to an excellent artist, and which are generally attributed to a correct method; but, when we come to hear the same singer in a concert, we find the voice unsteady, the intonation imperfect, the quality of tone dull and heavy, and in fact every indication that the performer does not know how to sing. Those of my readers who possess musical discrimination and whose judgment is not stultified by the glamour of distinguished names will admit that my description fits many of the well-known opera singers of the day. Now, the reason of this is to be found in the fact that none of these singers have acquired control over their medium of ex-

pression; in other words, they have never acquired a perfect technique. As a consequence of this they find themselves all astray like a ship without a rudder, when they are removed from the operatic stage, where the dramatic action draws their consciousness away from the mechanical processes of singing, thereby stimulating musical instinct and promoting spontaneity of utterance.

The conditions on the concert-stage, tending as they do to encourage a greater amount of deliberation and self-consciousness, put a damper on the impulse and instinctiveness promoted by dramatic action, and there is nothing to fall back on, no acquired technique to stand them in good stead under the changed conditions. Whenever we hear an artist sing as well in the concert-room as on the stage, displaying a uniform beauty of tone and execution, we may be sure that a good technique has been worked

for and acquired; that skill by control, and consequently art, has been achieved.

Now, what faculties does the acquisition of a perfect technique bring into play? We say, the very highest musical discrimination, the power to distinguish between the most subtle degrees and qualities of sound; the power to test with the ear the perfection of those small details in vocalization which go to make up the complete whole of technical perfection; an untiring patience in practising the different exercises which represent and bring into play the various vocal processes involved; a determination to accept no sounds that the ear does not fully approve, — nay, delight in, — and, above all, so strong a desire to reach perfection in every detail that the practice necessary to that end has no savor of drudgery, but instead, is approached with the keenest interest and relish. The perfunctory spirit in

which many students attempt to conquer the technical difficulties of their art is demoralizing to them as individuals and death-dealing to their artistic aspirations. The study of technique, considered as a means to an end — that end being a something ardently desired — should, in each minute detail, partake of that enthusiasm and loving spirit which successful achievement itself would naturally arouse in any true artist. The student should have a prophetic sense of ultimate fruition during every moment of his striving for technical perfection, always bearing in mind the larger purpose, or whole, which is the goal to be reached. It is this premonition of fulfilment, of joy to come, which provides the hope and confidence which are so essential to achievement in all undertakings, and without which failure is a foregone conclusion.

The Ideal in Technique

The technical side of art is commonly regarded as a mere mechanical achievement, because its immediate purpose is to subjugate and bring to obedience the physical members or organs of expression. With pianists, violinists, and performers on all other stringed instruments, we think of technique as related merely to the action of the fingers, hands, and arms; with players on wind instruments of all kinds, we associate it with the use of the mouth, the fingers, and control of the breath. With singers we regard it as consisting in control of the breath, of the vocal organs collectively, and also of the organs of speech.

When the fingers, hands, and arms of pianists and players of stringed instruments are absolutely at one with the will of the performers, the technique of their art is said to be conquered.

When a singer has succeeded in obtaining from his breathing and vocal apparatus coöperatively every degree of tone, from fortissimo to pianissimo, through his entire range of voice, together with the power to sustain long phrases, to sing quick or slow, legato and staccato passages, scales, trills, arpeggios, roulades, and gruppetti of all kinds, and, in addition, to enunciate clearly under all circumstances, he is said to possess a perfect technique.

Now, while it is a fact that the acquisition of technique involves the training of certain mechanisms, it certainly does not follow that the artist, in order to bring this about, must be, even for the time being, a mechanic. There is, in fact, no reason why the acquisition of technique should be a mechanical process at all.

There are actually two distinct ways of obtaining response from our organs;

the one is direct, the other is indirect. The direct way is where the student brings himself into conscious relationship with his mechanical apparatus, demanding therefrom certain actions with a view to obtaining certain results. The indirect way is where he bears in mind only the immediate effect by him desired, and where the physical medium is ruled by the idea of that effect. Now, if we are willing to admit that idealism is or ought to be the ruling factor in art, why should we exclude it from technique? For, as each faculty that goes to make up a perfect technique has its own particular expression, why should that expression not be ruled by its corresponding idea? I maintain that it should be so ruled, and that the true way to obtain complete mastery over our physical instrumentality is simply to acquire *in detail*, through practice, all the different musical qualities and elements that go to make up the per-

fection of musical expression. In accomplishing this we are actually training, in the only effectual way, the various mechanical processes which yield us the different musical results that form the component parts of that whole, known as a perfect technique.

The acquisition of these different divisions and subdivisions of the complete whole depends on our knowing what we want, *in detail;* and therefore we must learn what should be the effect on the ear of each particular element and exercise, how it *sounds* and not how the sound is made.

Technical training should consist in teaching the pupil to appreciate the subtle differences between one kind of sound and another in all the different vocal exercises that have to be practised, and technical practice should have for its immediate purpose simply the harmonizing of the tonal or musical intention,

with the tonal or musical result. Therefore, it is the knowledge or right idea of the sound in each note, or group of notes, which makes that exercise of any avail; for without that idea the various mechanisms involved have no order to obey, no directions to follow. Moreover, if there be in the singer's mind no idea how the tone, the scale, the arpeggio, the trill, or what not is to sound, how can he know, when he hears it, whether it is correct or not? His judgment, his approval or disapproval of the quality of the tone, must depend on his preconceived idea of it. Now, though the preconceived idea of tone is not necessarily a conscious picturing, or mental premonition of the tone to come, it certainly is, even in its most shadowy aspect, a latent sense of what the sound ought to be, founded on that sum total of musical perception which has been acquired, or which may be innate. In

either case this perception asserts itself so instantaneously that it appears to be instinctive, even though the instinct itself is the direct outcome of the constant reiteration of an intelligent tone-formula which has become, from long usage, habitual, and consequently, self-reproducing.

The Essentials of a Perfect Technique

Having now tried to show that, in acquiring technique, as in every other branch of artistic achievement, it is our perception of the precise result to be desired which rules and coördinates all our physical processes; that the degree of perfection to be attained depends on the fineness, the exquisiteness of that perception; and that, also, in technical work, or the perfecting of details of execution, the physical instrumentality, as such, should be absolutely ignored, — I will invite the attention of my readers

to a careful consideration of the particular details which form the essentials of a perfect vocal technique.

They are as small in number as they are important in character, and may be tabulated thus:

1. A perfect attack or initiation of tone.

2. A perfect legato, or smooth passage from one tone to another in both slow and rapid motion, as distinct from the slightly aspirated notes which so frequently pass muster for legato singing.

3. The *messa di voce*, or swelling and decreasing on a single sustained note.

4. The perfect unity of pitch and vowel.

5. A distinct articulation of all the consonants, both single and double, with as slight an interruption to the vocal sound as possible, except where a slight prolongation of the consonant may be

required to give special emphasis to a word.

The successful achievement of these five essentials depends on the way the sound is initiated, or rather, on whether the singer knows precisely what that initial sound should be; and the proper initiation, in its turn, depends on the way the breath is related to the vocal sound. The subject of breathing, therefore, must be the first point for discussion.

We have daily proof that our breathing apparatus serves us without any prompting or guidance in a great variety of ways, and that it does so according to what act we intend to perform, the act itself being our only concern. If we choose to walk, run, jump, row, or swim, do not our breathing muscles adapt themselves to our immediate needs by working spontaneously in different degrees and modes? If we are taking aim at a mark, or listening to a distant

sound, does not the breath stop? Or, if we lift a heavy weight, is not the thorax held automatically in a fixed position, thus affording the greatest amount of resistance? And we, meanwhile, far from directing them, do not even know what act we would have them perform in order to facilitate our purpose. Now, if all these different manœuvres take place of themselves, simply because we elect to do one thing rather than another and without our paying attention to the parts employed, why should we ever seek to obtain special service from our breathing apparatus in any other way? Even if the muscular coördination should occasionally be imperfect and not serve our purpose efficiently, all we need to do is to keep reasserting that purpose, or to repeat the act, until the desired result is obtained. In singing songs, one musical phrase draws on the breathing power differently from another,

some phrases demanding more breath than others, the expenditure of air being seldom uniform in any two phrases, and it is our quick apprehension of the musical phrase to come and how it should sound which actually becomes the ruling power of the apparatus that furnishes the sustaining medium, provided we allow it to serve us in the same way that it does in all other emergencies; that is, without direct interference with the physical processes themselves. It is, however, certainly necessary to maintain a good position, or carriage of the body, that is, a position favorable to the freest and most efficient action of the breathing muscles, both in inspiration and expiration; and, in order to do this, and make a habit of it, it should be thoroughly understood what position will, in most instances, best secure complete inflation and the most effectual use of breath.

The position which I advocate, in common with many of the best authorities of the day, is to stand erect and well poised on the feet, which should be firmly planted, one to the front and to the right or left of the other, and about a foot apart from it, allowing, of course, for variations in the height of individuals. The upper part of the chest should then be raised, which act favors the proper contraction of the diaphragm, the falling in of the abdomen and the fullest expansion of the thorax in respiration. Let it be also understood that the acts alike of inspiration and expiration should be performed independently of the raising of the chest, which should remain high, during the acts of breathing and of singing. The position above indicated is likewise the most favorable to the relaxing, or letting go, of the respiratory muscles during the act of singing, — a very important thing, as there is a

strong tendency on the part of many singers to *keep hold* of the breathing muscles during the production of tone, which results, as a matter of course, in a forced, hard, and in every way faulty production.

Beyond the above directions, which relate only to the correct carriage of the body, a habit to be acquired apart from singing, though always to be associated with it, I think the less said about the different methods of breathing, the better. My experience has convinced me that the elaborate directions and explanations usually given by teachers regarding the use of the breathing apparatus defeat their own purpose, by bringing the singer into conscious and, therefore, false relations with his physical motor.

We cannot sufficiently emphasize the fallacy of attempting to regulate the breath by any conscious restraint of

the expiratory process. The only conscious act should be taking breath; and how that breath is drawn into the lungs, how it is expelled, retained, or regulated, is positively of no concern whatever to the singer during the act itself, his whole attention being properly absorbed in the result which, when satisfactory, is inseparable from a feeling of complete control over the vocal tone, as such.

Thus, to apply our directions in detail, the rule, "to hold the breath until the tone is sung," should never be interpreted as a restraint of the expiratory muscles, but simply as an intention *not to allow breath to escape until the vocal sound is produced.* This has the following good results: while the diaphragm plays its legitimate part toward keeping the thorax fixed, it does so without causing the slightest rigidity or unnecessary tension in any part; everything remains *in statu quo;* the breath stays where it is, like

water in a jar, until the singer's impulse to sing gives the signal for its liberation. Whereas, if the singer holds back the breath at the diaphragm, the holding will not only be in excess of the demand, but, moreover, a sympathetic rigidity of other parts will ensue, which will prove inimical to the untrammelled and synchronous motions so necessary to the correct emission of tone.

Meanwhile, the strength, flexibility, and staying power of the breathing muscles collectively, which insure their immediate response to the singer's requirements, may be cultivated and developed apart from singing by practising exercises which will bring their different modes of action into play in an indirect way; and the following are a few technical exercises which I recommend. First: take the erect and well-balanced position above described; raise the chest in the region of the collarbone, and then take

a full, deep breath, *without noticing how it is done;* retain it for twenty or thirty seconds, *without observing how it is held in check;* and then give up the breath without reserve, not allowing the upper part of the chest to sink appreciably during the act of out-breathing. This exercise may be repeated at discretion, but the singer should be careful never to fatigue the chest muscles by too constant practice.

Second: after drawing a full breath and keeping it, say, ten or fifteen seconds, let the breath out through the closed teeth, making the sound either of *s* or of *sh*, the immediate object being to see how long the sound of *s* or *sh* can be comfortably and steadily maintained, but without any conscious desire to economize the breath. In suggesting these exercises my object is principally to indicate, in a practical way, the distinction I make between mechanical breathing and acquir-

ing control over the breathing apparatus in an indirect way. Exercises of this nature can, of course, be multiplied and varied *ad infinitum.*

It is comparatively easy, by the above means, to gain control of the breath apart from singing; that is, it takes but a short time to learn to inflate the lungs fully and freely, to keep the breath in suspense, and to let it out slowly and evenly. After this is accomplished, it is also not a difficult matter to maintain control of the breath in vocalizing. Many students achieve this at an early stage in their studies, but as soon as they begin to sing with words all control is lost and the breathing gymnastics seem to have been practised in vain. The physiological reason which lies back of this fact is not commonly understood, although it has been recognized by some few scientific investigators. As my present purpose, however, is not to

treat of, or explain physical causes, but rather to suggest practical remedies for existing dangers, I will at once indicate what I consider to be another of the most important factors in acquiring a good technique, inasmuch as the proper reserve or economy of breath in singing, *with words*, depends on it.

I hold the proper economy of breath to be a free use thereof without any waste; and, in order that there may be no waste, the singer must learn to articulate all consonants and double consonants without using any breath from the lungs, so that the current of air may be held in abeyance until the vocal, or sustained sound, is sung. This involves a rapid articulation and great flexibility in the organs of speech, and to cultivate these the student should practise the articulation of all the breath consonants by means of the air which is compressed in the mouth, and without drawing on

that which is in the lungs. This is what Melville Bell says on the subject in his "Postscripts on Elocution":

"When the current of unvocalized breath is altogether stopped by organic contact, as in *p*, *t*, *r*, the only audibility that the letter so formed can have is the puff or explosion which follows the separation of the organs. This must, therefore, be clearly heard, or the letter is partially lost. In the mode of producing this little effect lies one of the most important principles of speech, — a principle on the right application of which depends much of a speaker's distinctness and all of his ease. Here lies the point of importance. If only the breath in the mouth, and not any from the lungs, be ejected, a distinct, sharp, quick percussion will be heard, which gives to these breath articulations all the audibility of which they are susceptible. . . . It must be remembered that the breath in articulation is exploded from the mouth, *and not from the chest*. The space within which the air is compressed is above the glottis, and the effect of the compression must not be communicated below the glottis. The quality

of clear-cut articulation depends on the due separation of the functions of the vocalizing and articulating organs. The vocal sound seems to be unbroken, because the actions of the tongue and the lips, while interwoven with it, do not interfere with it.

"All singers and all speakers may attain this bright excellence of articulation by forming consonants with the economic impulses of the pharynx, instead of the wasteful explosion of breath from the chest."

I recommend singers to make this sounding of breathless consonants a daily practice, if they would acquire a good technique, as not only does it clinch the proper control and economy of breath, but it also promotes that rarest of qualities — a perfect legato, or sustaining of the vocal sound — in singing with words.

We have spoken first of the consonants because of their immediate relation to breath-control, and also, because they

are to be practised and perfected independently of vocal sound.

I have but little more to say about vowels after what I have already said, except to repeat that they should be an integral part of the sound, and not a superstructure; that, to the singer, they are simply so many differentiations of sound which must be both conceived and sensed as such; and that the idea of "forming" vowels must never enter into the singer's mind. In acquiring a perfect technique, the study of vowels should consist simply in learning to know and fully appreciate the subtlest distinctions between the sound of one vowel and that of another; to know, in singing with words, what vowel sound belongs properly to the sustained tone where the word contains phonetically a diphthong, as, for instance, in the word "night" the sustained vocal sound is (aa), in "voice" (aw), in "boy" (aw), in

"sound" (aa), in "dew" (oo), in "quote" (o), in "quite" (aa).* These things must be well impressed on the mind of the singer, so that, as soon as his eye falls on a word, he at once appreciates precisely what the vocal, or sustained sound, is, and makes straight for it, not allowing the consonants to divert him from aiming directly at the vocal sound, nor dwelling on them, except for the purpose of giving some special emphasis.

In vocalizing either rapid or moderately quick scales, arpeggios, roulades, grup-petti, or trills, it is the perfect legato which insures perfect intonation, distinctness, and breath-control. Legato singing must, therefore, be industriously practised as it plays so important a part in the achievement of a good technique; and, in order to do this, the singer must know the sound of a perfect

*See "The Philosophy of Singing," page 115. Harper Bros., New York.

legatq as distinct from the slightly aspirated sequent notes that so frequently pass muster for legato singing. To enter into a description of legato singing would be simply recapitulatmg what I have already said at length in "The Philosophy of Singing," page 99, to which I must, therefore, refer my readers, as also to page 104 for a description of the *messa di voce*. The principle upon which each and all of the separate details of a perfect technique should be acquired is manifestly the same. It wholly depends:

1. On the singer's knowledge and recognition of the particular qualities of tone which, in combination with the accompanying vowel, go to make up the fully rounded and fully developed vocal tone.

2. On the knowledge of how the vowels in all their variations should sound in sustained tones when sung on every possible word.

3. Which part of a diphthong belongs properly to the sustained vocal tone, and which is, on the contrary, an adjunct of the articulate sound.

4. The particular light or thin quality of sound which belongs to legato notes sung in quick succession, as in rapid scales and arpeggios, roulades, trills, and gruppetti.

5. What the effect of this lighter quality of sound is in motion, either rapid or moderate.

6. The difference between the sound of the *portamento*, or carrying of the voice from one tone to another, and that of the legato, or sustention of one tone till the next is sung.

7. The peculiar sharp, incisive, and distinct sound of all the different consonants when these are articulated without using any breath from the lungs.

It is the *effect on the ear* of all these

different vocal details with which the singer must concern himself in order to conquer the technique of his art. To this end the ear must be educated and the musical perceptions developed to their fullest extent by a capable teacher, as there are but few singers who know by intuition how all these different elements should sound. There is no better, quicker, or surer way than that of letting the pupil hear the sound itself, as it is the perception of that sound which instantaneously forms the mental picture, which, as we have tried to show, is the only intelligent guide and coördinating medium for the vocal processes in combination.

I have used the term "mental picture" so frequently in the course of this work that it behooves me, lest I should be misunderstood, to explain that I do not mean to convey the impression, either by that term, or by that of "tonal idea," or

"tone formula," that some deliberate mental process is to be gone through; but I would have it clearly understood that the "mental picture" of the tone is simply the knowledge, either innate or acquired, of correct vocal sound, asserting itself as will or intention. This intention that the sound shall be of one quality rather than another becomes purely subjective after the analytical study of tone has been effected; and so rapidly does the brain work, that the singer is aware of his actual intention only when he hears the tone which his brain had conceived, and not before.

But it depends wholly on what has gone before, that is, on the knowledge of tone, which is the result of analytical study, whether that intention is good or not; so that, when the singer utters a tone spontaneously, he is literally sampling the sum total of his acquired knowledge; he is testing his own per-

ception of musical sound, and discovering what his existing sense of beauty in sound actually is. We all know that the sound of our voice does not exist for us until it has departed from its physical generator into space, and out of space returned to greet the ear of its creator; and therefore we can only utter off-hand, and on the spur of a blind impulse, what seems to be our will.

CHAPTER XII

THE LIBERATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND WHAT FOLLOWS

IT is nothing new to say that an oft repeated act becomes less and less conscious, and ends by apparently taking place of itself without guidance or direct volition. Whether this is because the superior brain (*cerebrum*), the seat of conscious will, by frequently asserting itself in one direction, so perfects the training of its inferior officers, the central ganglia, or purveyors of the automatic processes, that it can occupy itself with something else while its original concept is being reproduced, or whether for some other reason more remote, is of no great consequence to us at the present moment; but whatever the true cause of this well-known fact may be, it is

certainly of interest and value to us to note that our state of mind is never exactly the same during the repetition of any voluntary act; that there is a perpetual liberation of consciousness, which thereby becomes free to take note of other objects or conceive other ideas. Thus, in singing, when a certain tone-concept has asserted itself repeatedly, in due time the concept or tone formula itself ceases to be conscious, and the superior brain now acts apparently as an organ of perception rather than of conception. It hears and approves or disapproves the sound which its inferior officer has purveyed.

This condition of things may become either a boon or a stumbling-block to the artist. If the liberated consciousness soars into a new world of ideality, forming ever fresh and more exquisite conceptions, it is a boon, indeed, in view of the vast world of emotions into which it can take

flight, and the broad fields of sublime imagery that are open to it! It is a supreme moment to the artist, this moment of liberated consciousness, when it is determined whether his art shall possess a soul, or only a body. But if, on the other hand, the liberated consciousness turns fleshward, becoming absorbed in taking note of the mechanical processes, it becomes like unto a master who, having instructed his man how to take care of his furnace, chooses to go down into the cellar and to stand over him while he performs his daily task, instead of remaining in his library, in the midst of his books and pictures and other objects of beauty, relying on the faithfulness and ability of his servant to carry out his orders. Such a use of the liberated consciousness is a bar to all progress; it is a direct negation of ideality and the nursery of degeneration in art.

We often see significant types of artists,

who have failed to soar into the world of ideals, among pianists who, by a constant repetition of the various mental formulas relating to technique in all its ramifications, have so liberated their consciousness from its controlling function that when one of these is playing, the listener is quickly persuaded that, were the performer so disposed, he could throw a candlestick in the air, catch it, and balance it on his nose, while executing a left-hand passage in a Tschaikowsky concerto. This kind of playing, it is true, often excites our wonder, and even our admiration, for it tells of faithful work well done; but, does it move or thrill us? Never! In fact, after listening to such a *tour de force* for a little while we soon become so fully convinced of the acrobatic skill of our man that we involuntarily discount forthwith all the difficulties to come, and take his future achievements for granted.

Now, *Cyrano de Bergerac* composed a strophe while he used the foils and ran through his adversary. And when the artist, like *Cyrano*, allows his consciousness to soar aloft into the realms of the ideal, leaving his acrobatic double behind to take care of the piano-keys, ah! then it is art indeed! Art with a soul before which we bow down and worship!

Now, to apply all of this to singing: when I have made myself familiar with the notes and words of a song, when I have pictured to myself definitely the sound of every note and word, *as a unit*, and verified the correctness of my conception through the ear, the time has come for me to throw to the winds all this deliberate conception of unified speech and tone, and let the unifying formula take care of itself. In achieving this there is always a moment when we must dare, — when we must trust to a hidden intelligence within ourselves, which, for

want of a better name, we will call the "subjective mind." This subjective mind, or inner consciousness, preserves the memory of the perfected tone, just as the photographic negative preserves the original picture, to be rendered positive at the will of the photographer; and this being so, our conscious thought is liberated and free to range in the realms of other ideals than those of sound alone. It is free to summon up images of love, in its tenderness, its joy, its ecstasy, its hope, its sorrow, its despair; and of hate, in its suspicion, its jealousy, its fury, and revenge; and all the fine and subtle modifications and intermixtures of these emotions. It is these imaginings, these mental pictures of the human emotions, that provide the soul, the very life, of the tone we hear. Without this background of imagination the sound of the voice is simply as the sound of any artificial

instrument — a flute, a clarionette, or a trombone — which possesses simply its characteristic tone, savoring either of pathos, mirth, or solemnity, but which can be varied but little outside of the actual tone color of the instrument itself in its different registers and in its contrasts from piano to forte. It is limited in its powers of expression, and therefore monotonous to the ear as a solo instrument, and adapted only to an orchestra, where it is used to furnish the particular expression which belongs specifically to it in one register or another. But the human voice is a miniature orchestra in itself, and the variety of expression, which the composer of orchestral works demands of his different instruments, the singer can and should also demand of his voice; but in order to do so he must, like the composer, become creative; he must be able to *imagine the thing he desires to hear*

expressed. It is truly marvellous how this simple operation of the imagination acts on the color, the quality, and the power of the voice! More than that, it caps the climax of perfect tone mechanism, for, the liberating of the consciousness from the formula of tone as such produces a corresponding liberation from all superfluous tension in the physical organs, which are thereby allowed to operate rapidly, coördinately and synchronously.

From this point of view, not only is the voice a miniature orchestra in itself, but the singer is at one and the same time both composer and conductor: the composer, in that he creates both the idea of the musical sound — even though unconsciously — and the idea of the emotion to be expressed; the conductor, in that he gives the signal for each tone to be sung, with all that it is to convey of expression. This signal, which again

is nothing but a mental fiat, finds its expression in the sudden, clear, and positive initiation of tone which we have likened to an unlocated, or blind stroke, bearing apparently no closer relation to the sound itself or to the organs of sound than does the stroke of the conductor's baton. This stroke seems, as I have said before, to emanate from the head, though rather from the fact that it is felt in no other part than that it actually appears to have a physical existence therein. The only difference between this head stroke and that of the orchestral conductor's baton is, that, whereas the conductor beats the time only on certain divisions of the bar, the singer makes his stroke on every note that is sung. In other words, every vocal tone must have its own particular impulse.

All that I have said above points to the fact that a vivid imagination is a

necessary part of a singer's equipment, unless he is content to use only a very limited portion of the latent power of expression with which he is endowed. Those who are possessed with this power should not fail to bring it into play on every occasion in learning to sing; those who have it in only a small degree should cultivate it to the fullest extent of their capacity; and those who have no imagination would better devote their attention to book-keeping, typewriting, or some such calling.

Chapter XIII

THE EXERCISE OF IMAGINATION IN SINGING

AS I have said before, the imagination can be a stumbling-block in the way of a singer if not properly applied. I have tried to show in a preceding chapter the folly of "imagining vain things," and the most effectual way of avoiding this danger is to occupy the mind with the right image. In order to do this the singer must give, at some time or other, his undivided attention to the text of the scena, aria, or song which he is to sing, with a view to interpreting it in a special manner; that is, not simply acquainting himself with the true meaning of the words, but also, and more particularly, with the special and peculiar mood or state of mind of which the text is the expression.

For, it is this state of mind, or mood, which the singer must be able to picture to himself, if his singing is to convey the real soul of the vocal phrase, or be in any sense truly dramatic. To do this takes intelligence, oftentimes of a higher order than that with which the student happens to be endowed; but where the pupil's power fails him to interpret the precise mood of which any particular part of the text is the expression, the teacher can supply the deficiency by suggesting the right emotion and thus stimulating the imagination of the pupil in the right direction.

Sometimes it takes a great deal of fine discrimination to determine exactly the way in which certain portions of a text should be interpreted, and there occur occasionally passages which might consistently be construed in either one of two ways.

As a rule, students will puzzle their

heads over the meaning of the words themselves, without seeking further, but it is not the words, as such, which should be their chief concern, but the actual feeling or emotion which the poet sought to convey through those words; for, it is precisely that feeling which they must seize upon, enter into, and hold as a mental picture till the end of the phrase or strophe that it dominates.

Thus, for example, in No. 2 of "The Maid of the Mill" cycle, — of which Schubert's setting is more or less familiar to all, — the poet makes his man talk about a brook, while in his heart he is thinking only of the maid. The accompaniment of the song suggests the rippling of the stream; the youth describes minutely every feature connected with it; but we must not be deceived; — every word reveals but the bewitched lover, who sees the miller's maid in every surrounding object. Now, it is the

singer's task to identify himself properly with the bewitched lover, but alas! I am compelled to own, that more often than not, when this song is heard, it sounds as if it were only about a brook.

Much has been said in the past about the artist "throwing himself into his part," and really feeling what he is singing; but this is simply indiscriminate talk, and many an unwary young singer has gone wrong as an exponent of dramatic music through trying to perform this mental acrobatic feat without having anything but a vague idea of what he was trying to do. The idea of "throwing himself" into any part suggests a sort of artificial exaltation, which results in squirmings, restlessness, lack of poise, uncertainty of tone, and every quality calculated to make the auditors uncomfortable. From this extreme, the placid, colorless, unemotional singer shines forth in grateful relief; for at least he preserves

the two good qualities of repose and simplicity, and it is better for the auditors to feel that something more is left to be desired than that there is something they would gladly dispense with.

Such singers as work themselves up to the kind of artificial emotional exaltation which may be justly called a species of dramatic hysteria are generally under the impression that they are producing a great effect on their audience. The fact is that they mistake their own intentions for the consummated effect itself, and consequently remain the sole enjoyers of their performance. The reason of their failure to produce the effect they desire is due to there being no unity between the pictured emotions and their medium of expression; for, it is not enough to be able to picture an emotion to oneself, the idea of the emotion must be conveyed somehow, both through its vocal medium and

through the entire personality of the singer, to the passive auditors, so that they become actually stirred thereby. Now, how is this to be done? In a very simple way. The singer, having determined on the nature of the sentiment, which the authors, both of the text and the music, sought to express in any given poetic sentence and accompanying musical phrase, has only *to imagine the sound, or effect of the whole;* that is, of the musical phrase in all its vocal perfection, *plus* its dramatic expression. This becomes possible, nay, easy, on account of the liberated consciousness spoken of in the beginning of the preceding chapter, which renders it unnecessary for the singer to give any special attention to the quality of the tone, as such, the idea of that quality merging itself into the idea of the general effect of the completed dramatic expression.

In giving these directions, I am simply

applying the same laws to dramatic expression in singing that I have emphasized and urged throughout this entire work; namely, the necessity for picturing beforehand, in all its completeness, the thing *that is to be;* this mental picture being the direct aim, and consequently the only efficient coördinating medium.

Let it be understood that the artist, in forming this mental picture, is scarcely conscious that it actually antedates its own expression. So marvellous is the spontaneity of expression reached in this way that it is almost impossible for the artist to distinguish between his intention and its fulfilment. The two appear identical; cause and effect seem one, but that one must always represent to him a mental fiat and *not an intentional physical act.**

*See upon this subject "The Philosophy of Singing," page 135; "Dramatic Expression and its Relation to the Emotions." Harper & Bros., New York.

Chapter XIV

THE UNIFICATION OF INTENTION AND RESULT

NEARLY everyone who is gifted with voice and a musical ear has some natural conception how his voice ought to sound, or, at least, how he would like it to sound, although that conception asserts itself in some instances only negatively at first; that is, the singer is not always distinctly conscious before the tone is uttered that he wants it to sound one way or another. As soon as he hears it, however, he knows at once that it either is or is not what he meant it to be; which indicates that somewhere in the depths of his subconsciousness, there was a conception, an intention, which either was realized, or which itself transcended the fulfilment.

The way in which this latent intention of ours works itself out and becomes self-evident, clear, and positive through tentative expression, is a highly interesting subject, embracing, as it does, the true relation that exists between our concept of tone and its productive medium. Now, there is in the beginning a great similarity between learning to shoot at a mark and learning to sing. The novice takes aim and, perhaps, hits the mark, much to his own surprise. He tries it again, and fails. After a few more vain attempts he, perhaps, again hits the mark, but he knows no more how he came to do it than why he failed before. It seems to him like a game of chance, and so it is, because as yet he does not know how to take aim intelligently. His success at the outset was due to that natural absorption in a *single purpose*, to the exclusion of all else, which is quite apt to belong to a

first attempt. In his subsequent efforts, however, he has already begun to notice how he was doing it; he is over-eager to succeed once more, perhaps, with just a shade of apprehension that he may not do so. Here we have three new elements, namely, attention to the process, eagerness, and fear, which means just so much consciousness deflected from his main purpose. His mind being no longer concentrated on the mark, singleness of purpose—the mainspring of coördinate action—is broken.

From now forward, however, provided his intuitions are good, he goes to work differently. He does one of two things: either he tries all sorts of positions until he finds that experiment to be useless; or he, without further ado, looks determinedly at his mark, and continues, again and again, to aim straight at it, paying no attention to anything else.

When he has reached this point, which

he surely will do if he is guided by his own intuition, and nobody undertakes to school him or supply him with a method, he begins already to perceive something of the real conditions of success. His eye is fast becoming trained to that subtle perception of distance, direction, and fluctuation in air current, which perception, acting directly through instinct brings about automatically the coördination of brain, nerve, and muscle necessary to the achievement of his purpose. After sufficient practice along these lines our novice becomes an expert, an artist; he can shoot a bird on the wing at any reasonable distance, and yet, he is not learned as to the precise amount of propelling force needed to produce a certain degree of molecular disturbance. He knows these things, however, in another way. A positive aim, practice, and experience have been his instructors, aided by patience, perse-

verance, and the use of his own intelligence and instinct.

There is really very little difference between the way the marksman becomes an expert and the way the singer learns how to produce perfect tone. The marksman's field of action is ruled by the eye, that of the singer by the ear, and that is practically all! In both cases an infinite number of subtle processes of brain, nerve, and muscle must coöperate automatically and with flash-like rapidity in response to the intention or aim of the performer. In both cases it depends alike on taking a correct — that is, a comprehensive — aim, undiverted by any thought either aside from it or connected with it. In both cases the chief stumbling block to success is apt to be imagination misapplied; by which I mean, instead of picturing at the outset the thing desired as already accomplished, permitting the idea of possible failure

to enter in — a fatal intrusion. For this idea of failure acts at once on the nerve-telegraphic system from brain to muscle, causing the physical machinery to balk like a frightened horse.

Like the marksman's, the singer's practice must, in the beginning, consist of a series of tentative efforts to produce tone, the ideal of which is in his mind, either consciously or unconsciously. The first tone he utters may or may not satisfy him, according to the degree of spontaneity his natural impulse affords. If it should not fulfil his ideal, he must sing it again and again, until, by repeatedly hearing what he does not want, he gradually grows clear in his mind as to what he does want. In other words, it is by a progressive process of elimination that this clarifying of the judgment takes place and that the formula through which the will acts becomes perfected.

The singer now begins to delight in the tone he hears, and the more he delights in it the better it grows.

In the course of time, and after frequent repetition, he becomes familiar with the physical impressions or sensations which accompany the production of tone; and, at this juncture, he is confronted with the first danger-signal, for, as soon as his attention is attracted to the physical sensations of voice, he begins unconsciously to demand the different tones in terms of throat-adjustments, or positions, instead of in terms of sound; and from this time forward his voice steadily deteriorates. His singing now is labored, and ere long tone-production becomes almost painful to him, instead of a delight. The reason of this back-sliding is a complete mystery to him, for he is not aware of the fact that his state of mind has undergone a radical change, in that his aim is now material

instead of ideal, that the formula through which his will is now acting is tongue, not tone.

This catastrophe, however, is not to be laid to the charge of the singer in any way; it does not proceed from lack of intelligence or from carelessness, it is simply the inevitable "falling into consciousness" that has always been apparently a necessary phase in our development. It is the passing from an Eden of security on to the perplexities of a material state, through which we must find our way to a paradise of perfected knowledge, where we shall come to realize the actual meaning and application of the sentence: "To lose thyself is to find thyself."

The only question with the singer is, how long he shall remain in his world of physical complexities before passing on to the world of ideals. He may remain there struggling, or groping in

the dark, till he loses heart, or, perhaps, till he forgets whither he is bound; he may accept his bondage to the flesh and content himself therewith; or he may persuade himself that there is no ideal to be reached, and that the only way to grow is to put on more flesh! All these things may happen on the road to art. Do we not see pianists, violinists, and every variety of performer, including singers, involved in the toils of technique, playing and singing like so many machines — and always believing that all they need is more technique?

Now this deterioration of tone which I have above described as an inevitable catastrophe, is, as a phenomenon, well known to all singers and teachers; but no one, so far as I am aware, has known how to account for it, nor how to deal with it. The only way that has ever been found to get back the vanished charm of the tone is to stop singing for

a period sufficiently long to lose the mental impression of the impoverished sounds and start again with a fresh impulse and new tone-concept. This remedy is mostly effectual as far as it goes, but it is only temporary and does not strike at the root of the evil; for in a little while after practice is resumed there is always sure to be a recurrence of the same conditions.

I consider, therefore, that this is the critical phase in a singer's development, for he finds himself in a state of utter mental confusion and does not know which way to turn. If he goes plodding along in the same way, the *physical sensations* of tone-production grow stronger by repetition, and the bad mechanism, consequent to a physical formula, becomes more and more confirmed; besides which, the singer receives so strong a brain-impression of the faulty tone itself that he cannot recall his original idea.

Now, to be forewarned is to be forearmed in this case as in many others. If the singer knows already that this is only a phase of consciousness through which he must necessarily pass, he will not be morally and mentally upset by it when it arrives, but he will learn to regard it as a natural and inevitable part of his artistic development. His attitude will be much the same as that of the swimmer, or diver, who jumps from an eminence, knowing that he must go down in the water just so far before he can rise to the surface. If, however, a novice at swimming makes such a jump without knowing what will happen, he will think, when he sinks, that he is drowning, and, instead of being passive till he comes up again, he will struggle and squirm, — with the result that he surely will drown unless someone comes to the rescue. The analogy holds good throughout, for, in both cases faith,

hope, and confidence are indispensable.

If the singer loses heart at this critical juncture he will accomplish nothing; if he struggles against this inevitable downward bend in the law of progress, he will enter into complications from which he will not be able to free himself; and, unless some one arrives in season to throw light on his path and thus extricate him from the labyrinth of physical processes in which he is entangled, he will never find his way to his ideal again.

Now to drop metaphor, where does the forewarned singer stand in relation to this uncomfortable phase of consciousness?

Just here: he knows that while he cannot help noticing the way the different sounds feel in his throat, he must resist the temptation of associating these sensations with his tone-concept, and stead-

fastly tie to his idea of vocal sound *as it is heard, not as it is made.* If he perseveres in this, his knowledge of parts will soon be relegated to a sub-consciousness and no longer obtrude itself to his distraction. He will have conquered his natural enemy in the flesh and crossed the Rubicon unscathed, after which he can remain safely enthroned in the realm of sound where no fear of disaster need trouble him.

So much for the mere production of tone. But the practice of singing involves a great deal more than tone-production, for when the singer has successfully applied the above rules to every form of vocalization, he has only reached the point where his voice is rendered fit to express such feelings and such ideals as he is able to conceive. He has now, by virtue of his unerring tone-perception and unflagging quest for beauty and perfection in vocal sound,

constructed an instrument which is so absolutely under the control of his will that it is practically identical with it. He can now say with truth, "My voice and I are one!"

But now the question which arises in his mind is, "What message shall my voice carry to my hearers?" And the inevitable answer is: "My voice must carry to them every emotion, every subtle feeling, every poetic idea which I, a sentient being, and a creature of imagination, am capable of conceiving. For I, the singer, am an interpreter of the great mysteries of life and human emotions, and of all that both the poet and the dramatist have perceived of these; I must enter into their spirit, get back of their expression; I must picture to myself each dramatic situation, each shade of sentiment so vividly, and reproduce it so truthfully, that my audience, through my expression, may

recognize those same emotions which were father to the poet's song." And this leads naturally to a consideration of the difference between the vocalist and the dramatic singer, a subject which demands a chapter to itself.

Chapter XV

THE VOCALIST AND THE DRAMATIC SINGER

NEARLY everyone who is interested in the art of singing is more or less aware that there is a distinct difference between a vocalist and a dramatic singer; that they belong, in fact, to two different types. If, however, we ask for a definition of their respective characteristics, we find, as a rule, that a vocalist is regarded as a light soprano with a flexible voice, who sings the Shadow Song from "Dinorah," the Bell Song of "Lakmé," sundry waltz songs, and other compositions which call for a liberal display of vocal pyrotechnics; while a dramatic singer is one with a robust voice, who affects the declamatory style and sings the scene and aria from "Fidelio," "Oberon," *Elizabeth's* song from "Tannhäuser,"

and that ilk. If we reflect, however, we shall recall to our memory sundry sopranos with light and flexible voices, who, when occasion demanded, were, in the truest sense dramatic, as well as a goodly number of robust, declamatory singers who proved to be the very reverse. According to report, I should say that Jenny Lind might be classed among the first, while Parepa belonged properly to the second category. Parepa was often called a dramatic singer because she performed the role of *Donna Anna* and others of that class, whereas, in reality, she was simply a fine vocalist with a robust voice, who sang dramatic music undramatically. In consideration, therefore, of the vagueness of understanding which prevails here and there on this subject, some little consideration of the real distinction between these two types will, I believe, be in place in this treatise.

Our definition of a vocalist is: one who aims exclusively at a perfected musical expression in singing; by which we mean the dynamic and phonic, or acoustic perfection of tone, and all the different technical attainments necessary to the correct execution of any and every musical phrase or passage which may occur in any song or aria. In other words, the vocalist regards the art of singing as something sufficient to itself, and not an artistic excellence to be acquired as a means to an end, excepting in so far as lyrical and poetic expression may be regarded as an end. The principal endeavor of the vocalist is to attain absolute control of the voice in order that every musical phrase may be a model of pure, sustained, sympathetic, and expressive vocal sound, and every scale, arpeggio, roulade, trill, or gruppetto a model of perfect intonation, smoothness, and brilliancy, the highest goal of

the vocalist being beauty, charm, and poetic expression. These are qualities which may be sought and attained alike by voices of all descriptions, whether light or robust, from the *basso profondo* to the *soprano acuto;* and it depends, not on the voice, but on the temperament, the make-up of the individual, whether the trained and successful vocalist will remain always just a vocalist and nothing more.

The dramatic singer differs from the vocalist in this: that over and above musical and poetic expression he has also a tale to tell. He has feelings, emotions, passions, which seek an outlet and make for utterance; his instinct is to describe, to represent what he knows, what he feels, what he thinks, or what he imagines. His aspiration is to stir the hearts of his audience, to fire their imaginations, to bring to them and translate to their understanding the great

throb of human emotions, which many among them may, perhaps, never have known. In other words, the expressions of the dramatic artist search out, stimulate, and covibrate with the inmost depths of the human heart; and he — the artist — furnishes his fellow-creatures with a sort of vicarious experience of things not lived, not loved, nor even dreamed of, perhaps. This is what we believe to be actually the highest mission of dramatic art.

It is frequently taken for granted, because a dramatic singer differs from a vocalist, that there is no harmonious relation between the two types; that a dramatic singer cannot be a vocalist, and that a vocalist cannot be a dramatic singer. This is, however, far from being the truth. Dramatic singing is not properly a substitute for vocal art, but a culmination thereof; and where vocalists stop short at perfected vocal expression, it is

because of a limitation in their natures which has furnished them with no impulse to go beyond, or to express anything more than an abstract idea of beauty. The dramatic power is the result of a larger, richer nature and a more complete artistic endowment; it is something superadded to the highest form of purely vocal expression in its most poetic aspect.

It is evident, then, that the dramatic singer who would deserve the title of "artist" must first become a perfect vocalist. He must master all the technical details which form the bone and sinew of the vocalist's excellence, as, otherwise, these unconquered foes will turn and rend him; or, in other words, they will, at some time, obtrude themselves and deflect him from his dramatic purpose.

The larger number of dramatic singers before the public in the present day are not accomplished vocalists. Most of

them have begun at the wrong end, and studied dramatic roles before they have learned how to sing. They owe their temporary success to natural gifts which haply have, at least, not been tampered with; to wit, a well-constructed and healthy physical equipment, an emotional nature, musical instinct, a goodly share of imitative power, and above all, that faculty of rising to the occasion under excitement which we call "temperament." Such singers, however, while they awaken enthusiasm and attain distinction for the time, are nothing more than ephemera, because there can be nothing permanent in an art where there is no underpinning of knowledge, or recognition of the actual qualities on which excellence depends. Thus the world of art is often, during a short period, illuminated by sundry bright stars who seem for the time being to unite all the qualities because a correct

delivery of tone has been fallen into or acquired unconsciously. But a good tone-production which has been stumbled upon is a boon which the singer can hold fast only when it is fully appreciated for what it is; and, therefore, these ephemera, who do not owe their success to conquest following a long course of intelligent training and study, but chiefly to natural endowment and favorable conditions, are apt to succumb to the first serious obstacle. A long illness, or any circumstance which serves to break the current of spontaneity, by disturbing the automatic coördination of parts, renders them helpless. They know they have lost something, but what that something is they cannot tell, and, therefore, they have no idea what to seek, what to strive for, in order to regain their lost power.

We believe, therefore, that the dramatic gift, when it asserts itself strongly before

the singer has matured as a vocalist, is a dangerous possession, its compelling force being so great that the untrained vocal organs often yield effects which would only be possible, without strain, after much technical practice; the result to the vocal apparatus being analogous to that experienced by one who, lacking in physical strength, had successfully achieved some muscular feat by sheer nerve force. It is here that we have the explanation of the organic demoralization of Pauline Lucca after each triumphant performance on the stage, and history has repeated itself in not a few instances of this kind since the period of her public career. Lucca, however, possessed genius, and cannot be compared to the average dramatic singer of the day except in the fact of never having fully mastered the technique of vocalization; and moreover, she belonged to an art period when musical instinct

had all the strength of a faculty which had for centuries been depended on as the only ruler of the vocal processes.

Among those who had mastered the art of vocalization before becoming dramatic singers we may cite Tietjens and Lehmann. Both of these admirable artists have had long public careers; both of them could execute rapid and intricate passages, demanding the greatest flexibility, with the ease of a light soprano, and both of them possessed enormous power of endurance. I have never known either one of these artists to be upset after singing even the most exhausting roles. We have heard Madame Lehmann declaim the music of "Isolde" in a most impressively dramatic style, and the next night but one, sing the florid music of "Euryanthe" with surprising brilliancy and with the perfection of *bel canto*. In striking contrast to this was Alvary, who in "Euryanthe"

was unable to sing a single smooth phrase, sustain a single steady tone, or even control the pitch of his voice, whereas the night before in "Siegfried" he was a demigod! It was obvious to the intelligent auditor that Lehmann was a vocalist as well as a dramatic singer, and that the other was not. Judging from intelligent description, we believe that Malibran, Pasta, Grisi, Alboni, Mario, Donzelli, and Tamburini were vocalists with a perfected technique before they ever attempted to sing dramatic music; for it was the custom in the good old days for teachers to make their pupils sing nothing but solfeggii and vocalizing exercises for many years before attempting anything else, with the result that the freshness and beauty of their voices lasted until old age, or until ill health overtook them.

In Victor Maurel, we have a dramatic singer, thoroughly equipped in all the

highest essentials of art, uniting a keen sense of vocal perfection, a powerful imagination, and a strongly emotional nature, making for utterance, to a magnificent poise and power of concentration.

In Adelina Patti, we have an instance of an exquisite vocalist who had apparently no aspiration beyond the expression of simple beauty; no passionate emotions to give vent to; and who was never tempted to soar into the world of imagery. Of her type she was a great artist, if by artist is understood one who had acquired complete control over the instrumentality of her art, and possessed at the same time a fine sense of beauty. We confess, however, to have missed always something in her singing — to have longed for something more of warmth and color. After all, singing, in its greatest perfection, cannot go much further than to delight the listener. It is, doubtless, an inexpressible

joy to hear beautiful sounds; more than that, it is both stimulating and inspiring either to see or hear a perfect thing of its kind. Good is always good, both intrinsically and in its effect, but the great mass of struggling humanity needs something besides a stimulus to its sense of beauty. It needs to learn — to be taught — of what stuff it is made. We recognize in dramatic art a sort of mirror in which man sees himself reflected. Through it he may come to a knowledge of his own potentialities; by its means he may become aware of latent longings, of buried aspirations, which, in the dull commonplace of his life and surroundings, or the material aims of his workaday existence might, without it, never have come to light.

From this point of view we believe that while the vocalist, or votary of pure beauty, stands, perhaps, for the highest spiritual ideal, the dramatic

singer fills a crying need of humanity, — a need that must be satisfied before the final comprehension of the true relations of good and evil can be reached, — a comprehension which constitutes the triumphal harmony of conscious life.

CHAPTER XVI

CORRESPONDENCES OF MOOD, MIND, AND MECHANISM

IT is hardly necessary for me to do more than call attention to the well-known fact that our state of mind, or what we are thinking, has an immediate effect on the muscles of the body, the circulation of the blood, and the respiration, without our intending it, or even knowing it. It is evidenced in an infinite number of ways, such as, the sagging or dropping of the jaw and lengthening of the face when our thoughts are serious or sad; the broadening of the face when they are merry; the screwing up of the eyes when something comical or funny is in the mind; the setting of the jaws when we are mentally determined on a particular course of action. Again it is evidenced by the heavy, slow movement of the

limbs and joints when compelled to rise or go on an errand unwillingly, and, *per contra*, the rapid, alert action of these same muscles when the mandate is an agreeable one.

If one is suddenly made conscious of either admiration or of suspicion, how the blood mantles the cheeks! In anger, how it rushes to the head! When one is under the influence of fear, how it recedes, leaving a deadly pallor! In cases of extreme terror the circulation is even entirely arrested for the time being. How immediately the respiration is affected during agitation of any sort! One fairly pants for breath under excitement. And if one is awaiting a momentous decision, respiration ceases altogether until the die is cast. One might fill pages with interesting instances of the quick response of the muscles to the slightest change in mood or tenor of thought, were it necessary to do so.

Of course, the more concentrated the thought, the stronger the impression on the muscles. Muscle-reading, so called, — or rather, mind-reading through the involuntary action of the muscles, — when influenced by a dominating idea, is a remarkable illustration of this fact with which we are all more or less familiar. It does not seem to have occurred to anyone, however, that these correspondences between states of mind and our physical instrument are present in full force when we sing. It is nevertheless a fact to which we should do well to turn our attention, as every shade of mood or thought has its influence somewhere, somehow, on the body; and therefore it behooves us to regulate our thoughts as far as possible in such a way as to ensure the best physical results. If the reader is disposed to try a very simple experiment to test the application of our statement to

singing, let him take a comfortable position of repose, and with lips apart, *think* the five vowels successively. He will find that with each vowel-image there will be a slight involuntary muscular response in the throat unless he determinately *wills* to preserve absolute stillness. From this it will easily be seen that if, as we believe, vowels in singing can be formed in more than one way, to wit, either above the larynx and apart from the vibratory medium, or *in* the larynx itself—the vocal differentiation being thus a radical element of tone and not a superstructure, it depends on the way we conceive the tone whether the vowels are formed in the one place or the other. If we picture the vowel as a form or mould into which the musical tone is to fit, the throat or mouth position of that vowel will antedate by a fraction of a second the pitch of the tone; but if, on the contrary, we conceive the vowel

in the pitch itself, as a differentiated musical sound and not as something with a form or shape independent of sound, the order will be reversed, and the two will be one, not only in effect but in fact.

As the quality of tone produced in this latter way is incomparably finer than the other, — the sound ringing clearer and purer and being infinitely more spontaneous and direct in its effect, besides being distinguished for its sympathetic and expressive quality, — it certainly behooves the singer to cultivate the habit of picturing *sounds* instead of vocal forms or positions.

Where the singer conceives vocal sounds, according to any idea of their relation to the throat, it results in uprisings of the tongue, and various other physical contortions, which impede, thicken, and pervert the tone, besides rendering control of pitch extremely

difficult. If, in order to correct the above defects, directions are given to "keep the tongue flat," the result is a stiffening at the root of the tongue, which has a most disagreeable effect on the tone, besides causing a decided tendency to flatness. Meanwhile, if the tone is rightly conceived as pure vocal sound, the tongue will remain flat of itself, but instead of stiffening it will be relaxed and passively ready to perform the necessary movements for articulation. Under the seconditions the complementary movements of the tongue in connection with the vowels will take place at the front and sides, near the tip; and the back part will remain still, so that the vibrations of air in the naso-pharyngeal cavity will be unimpeded, and one vowel will be as easily produced with full resonance of tone as another.

The singer should bear in mind that every emotion, mood, or thought "bears

fruit after its kind." Doubt or hesitancy manifests itself in a lack of coördination of the vocal processes, the effect being uncertainty of attack and a total absence of vitality in the tone. Eagerness or anxiety manifests itself in a general physical tension or rigidity of the parts, the effect being hardness of tone and lack of flexibility.

On the other hand, confidence expresses itself in directness and spontaneity of action, the result being clearness and precision of attack, vigor and vitality of tone. Confidence, therefore, is to be cherished as the most desirable of all feelings, because it not only stimulates impulse, but it goes hand in hand with that most subtle of all harmonizing powers—delight or relish in the act itself, and anticipation of pleasure to be enjoyed.

One of the most interesting facts of this order is the startling difference

between the voice of one who delights in the act of singing itself, and of one who regards it as an arduous undertaking, as something which may result eventually in giving pleasure, but which, for the present, is up-hill work. A premonition of relish or anticipation of exquisite pleasure acts immediately on the voice in such a way as to bring into it a wealth of overtones which cause it fairly to sparkle as well as to be charged with warmth and color. Perhaps it may seem rather a comical conceit to make the analogy that when your mouth "waters" for some favorite fruit it actually tastes more juicy and luscious than it does when you eat it in "cold blood" or in a preoccupied mood; but it is true, nevertheless, and, like the taste of the fruit, the tone in singing grows more beautiful when our thoughts go out to it with desire. On the other hand, the voice of the anxious, strenuous student is always

heavy and dull, the tone is depressing to the listener, often flat, and utterly without elasticity.

Tone conceived in a neutral spirit makes one feel neither hot nor cold, it makes no impression whatever. And when singing is undertaken in a perfunctory or an unwilling spirit it is simply impossible!

More than half the young people who think they would like to sing but who are, to their grief, pronounced "voiceless" belong to those who, being without enthusiasm, approach their task in a perfunctory spirit. They bring to bear on their attempts to sing neither an ideal nor any real impulse, but only a general vague notion that it would be a good thing to sing. The vocal organs of many of these young people are just as well constructed and as capable as those of the more enthusiastic type, but the motive power is lacking,

and their voices resemble the puppet show when there is no man inside to make the dolls dance. I have often succeeded in exciting a momentary impulse and desire in one of these, with astounding results, for the time being, inasmuch as one of these apparently "voiceless" people would suddenly produce some magnificent tones; which shows that the fault was not with the vocal organs but with the individual. But the process of obtaining these sounds was much the same as galvanizing a corpse, and, therefore, not to be thought of as a permanent undertaking. We may add that a perfunctory and listless temperament can often be traced to the state of health — a defect in the circulation of blood, or some such cause; let that condition be remedied by proper exercise in the open air and a general attention to the physical laws of health, and the corpse may be permanently

brought to life! All that I have said above points to the reason why the voices of cold, unenthusiastic singers never really satisfy us, no matter how clear, full, and resonant they may be, nor how perfect the intonation or other technical qualities; and why, on the other hand, an untrained singer who simply appreciates the joy of hearing her own voice succeeds in giving us a pleasure out of all proportion with her vocal excellence. We sum her up thus: she does not know how to sing, but she has some beautiful tones in her voice, and — temperament.

The point of this latter argument is that nobody should attempt to sing who does not feel a real impulse to voice his emotions, or, at least, a genuine stirring to utter vocal sounds. No one should waste his energy in studying the art of singing who does not find sufficient interest and pleasure in the trying — in the temporarily "vain efforts to become"

— to banish all thought of laboriousness, or all danger of discouragement. The student must love his work even as the full-fledged artist loves the fruits of his work, or he can never know, in his own person, that supreme joy which the conquest of art brings in its train.

Another important fact bearing on the influence of mood over the vocal processes is the wonderful effect of repose on the coördinate action of all the parts collectively. We have observed that the most beautiful tone and the most perfect breath-control is when the tone is initiated in an absolute stillness of the entire body. Not a rigid stillness, mark you, but a perfect repose, which, while it prevails for only an infinitesimal fraction of a second, is enough to insure the right conditions for an initiation of tone without either explosiveness or escape of unvocalized breath. This stillness, or coming to rest of all the physical

organs, is like unto that which occurs when we listen intently to a distant sound, or crouch to observe a bird or insect which a breath might disturb. It is as though even the natural pulsations of the body were momentarily suspended during this period of concentrated attention. This is the condition which accompanies the singer's mental premonition of sound, and it is only when his attention is directed toward the sound to come, as something apart and distinct from the body which produces it, that it takes place. In other words, should the singer, following our description, undertake to hold the breath and bring about this organic stillness by simply willing it, the effect will not be the same. The condition must at all costs be brought about indirectly, that is with the purpose of mental concentration on the tone in view; only in that way will the muscles and nerves of the body

preserve the necessary neutrality and passivity to the cerebral action.

While these phenomena may be tested in detail by the singer in practising, just as all technical details may be tested separately, the only practical thing he can do to favor this, when in the full action of singing, is to preserve the most perfect repose and mental balance possible, — a repose which belongs to confidence and security, without even a passing shadow of doubt; that same confidence possessed by animals in action through singleness of purpose.

We know that it is not easy to quell the natural eagerness and anxiety to succeed in what we are attempting, with its accompanying fear that we may fail; but it is an indispensable part of an artist's education to accomplish this, and it must be achieved at all costs. It may help us to remember that the successful issue of our endeavor is the

only mental picture or brain-impression which ever brings us satisfactory results m anything we attempt. The postulate, "I know I cannot do it," or, "I am afraid I cannot do it," is invariably its own guarantee of failure. "Whatever I *want* to do I can do" is the only reasonable postulate. I say "reasonable" advisedly, because there is within us some mysterious intelligence which gauges our powers to do and to be, and which, somehow, prevents us from really wanting or expecting the impossible from ourselves. Certain achievements seem impossible to the looker-on, but the performer has that within him which says, "I can do," and the so-called impossible is accomplished. We often hear someone remark on the quiet confidence with which a certain person performed some extraordinary feat involving perhaps danger to life and limb, and in that expression is contained the very nib of it. Quiet, con-

fidence, repose — these are the leading states of mind which go hand-in-hand with concentrated energy, and which bring about that perfect coördination of brain, nerve, and muscle which belong to successful achievement.

A short time ago I was visiting a friend, whose pet cat was attracted by some flowers in a vase on the mantel-piece. The vase stood in the midst of a number of fragile articles of china and Venetian glass. The cat made one prodigious leap from the hearth to the mantel, which would have made an acrobat green with envy, and lighted with a precision which was simply marvellous on the only safe spot its surface presented. It smelt of the flowers, then threaded its way between the bric-à-brac, without disaster, to a corner of the mantel from which it vaulted to the hearth again. After observing this performance with breathless interest, I

turned to my friend and said, "Your cat seems to be an experienced acrobat! Do you allow it to practise amongst your egg-shell china and glass?" She replied, "It never does any damage as long as no one disturbs it, and the only time it ever broke anything was when my maid, in alarm for my valuables, suddenly called it off; the poor thing was startled and knocked over a glass vase with its tail." This is only one more illustration of the wonderful precision in action occasioned by a direct aim undisturbed with doubt or fear, — by the brute-like singleness of purpose that represents, "I want, and I will" — just that and nothing else. You will observe that the minute the cat's attention was distracted from its purpose, all coördination ceased. The nerve current was broken, and repose was lost. We lose our repose and destroy our own concentration of energy by lack of mental

poise. We are not by way of being startled by some external incident when we sing; our vagrant thoughts achieve disaster for us without any aid from outside events, and it is to guard against this that the singer should strive to the best of his ability. It is not easy to make any practical suggestions as to how this may be accomplished, as the control of thought is something so intimate that each one must achieve it for himself in his own way; but it may be helpful to the student to describe how we may maintain our singleness of purpose while we are in some degree conscious of other happenings, as, for instance, when we are absorbed in writing or reading, and yet are aware that the rain is pattering against the windows. Otherwise we may make of concentration too strenuous an effort to focus the attention on one thing at a time. One of the best practical illustrations with

which I can furnish the singer in this matter is the peculiar relation of the consciousness, in singing, to the instrumental accompaniment.

It is obvious that the singer's uninterrupted attention belongs properly to the melodic phrase which is his part of the performance, every tone of which phrase can be vocalized only by virtue of his mental concept thereof. Nevertheless, the singer is, in some degree, aware of the harmonies and rhythmic figures which accompany the melody he is singing, and if the accompaniment is bungled he is liable to be upset by it. An experienced artist, however, has learned how to prevent himself from being distracted by the accompaniment, and how to attend to his own part without being influenced by what the instruments are doing. He hears what they are playing, but it is only a surface recognition and does not disturb the continuous

flow of the melodic progression in his brain.

This is a fair analogy of what concentration in singing really means, and may aid in counteracting any exaggerated ideas which may be formed on the strength of my exhortations to achieve it.

I have known many instances of young singers who used their voices admirably in singing without accompaniment, but, as soon as they sang in combination with the harmonies of the song, their tone lost all balance and security. This was simply because the ear was appealed to and distracted by new and unfamiliar sounds. This difficulty is, however, easily overcome, and there is no better practice than singing an inner voice in part songs for learning to keep the mind steady in purpose. One of the best tests of concentration of this kind, after it has been acquired, is to sing a song like Schumann's "Frühlingsnacht,"

or Schubert's "Barcarolle," to your own accompaniment, provided you can play as well as sing. Of course the piano part must first be mastered so that it may go by itself, and then it is highly interesting to note how completely the mind centres itself on the vocal melody to the exclusion of the accompaniment, which is a purely automatic performance.

There are always those who undertake to sing to their own accompaniment without having acquired the necessary automatism; but it is better to draw a veil over the performances of these unwary ones.

The last, but not the least, interesting illustration of the despotic rule of thought or idea over the vocal mechanism is the startling way in which tone-color is varied as soon as the vocalist takes on dramatic expression, or, in other words, pictures different emotions in conjunction with vocal sounds. The

tones of the voice which, up to that time, may be described as representing every possible shade of one single color, now take on every color of the prism in all their variations of light and shade. The singer can easily test for himself in a very simple way the ready response of one tone mechanism rather than another to the mental formula of one mood rather than another. Let him, for instance, attune himself to a playful or caressing mien in singing a certain phrase, and at once his voice will take on a light quality of tone, which will, in reality, be reinforced in the head only, without chest resonance; then let him in singing the same phrase postulate an angry passion, or a sad, or solemn sentiment, and chest resonance will at once assert itself in full force, the whole tone-color of the phrase being entirely different in effect.

We could fill a chapter with descrip-

tions of the special qualities of tone induced by different dramatic formulas, but here and now we will content ourselves with simply suggesting the way in which this interesting and far-reaching law of correspondences manifests itself in singing.

The different comminglings of tone-color necessitate at times an extraordinary interchange of vocal mechanisms, and a merging or mixing up of modes of production such as would defy an expert to follow or define. When we consider that these unusual and unpractical modes of production respond at once — as they do — to the augmented formula of tone plus passion, we must conclude, even if we have not been willing to do so before, that the idea, or fleeting picture of the mind, rules absolute over the flesh when untrammelled and unlimited by any responsibility concerning it; and we may pin our faith to the

fact that, as long as the mind never gives the flesh "its head," so that it can turn and react on it, it remains master, and compels from its blind slave the working of its sovereign will.

Chapter XVII

SOMETHING ABOUT METHODS

METHOD is, in its essence, simply the way our intelligence prompts us to accomplish our purpose. It is something, therefore, that each individual should, if possible, create for himself, and never borrow unless his own intelligence fails him absolutely after repeated efforts. When all his own resources fail him, he may, as a *pis aller*, borrow the method of someone else. This is, of course, a tacit admission of his own incompetency for the time being, — a fact, however, to which many of us have, alas! to resign ourselves whether we like it or not.

There is no excuse, however, for using in the realm of art that cut and dried commodity which goes by the name of

method. It is in its place when it helps the unskilled laborer to stack hay, to plant potatoes and turnips, or to make bricks. It is used vicariously in thousands of the larger operations of life; and properly so, especially where corporations and groups of people are working together to one end. In fact, methods have, in a thousand ways, become almost a universal law in action. But when we are dealing with art, they are out of place if prescribed by others, for art is nothing if not individual; and, therefore, the method, or manner of acquiring skill therein, should also be, as far as possible, individual.

Where a method is imposed on a singer by an intelligence not his own, it not only has the effect of stultifying his own powers, but it also acts as a positive limitation in expression. He may, however, with good results, adopt a method by selection instead of evolving it from

his own consciousness, because in so doing he is guided at least by his own intuitions; and consequently there will be an agreement between purpose and process, which, with a superimposed method, would not exist.

Where voice is to yield a genuine and vital expression of the emotions there must be a perfect *unity of action*, which can prevail only where one intelligence controls the whole system of coördinated action from the very beginning, and where the individual instinct serves the individual purpose, not only in the process itself, but also in finding the way to perfect that process; that is, in discovering the right method.

Let us take, for example, a singer with a good strong voice, which, however, sounds harsh and unpleasant on certain notes, and weak and insufficient on some others, but who, nevertheless, sings out lustily, with confidence, and with anima-

tion. In other words, a singer with good healthy instincts, but in the rough. Here is a good subject for education. Now, what would be the rational way to train such a one? Should we not first call his attention to such beauty as there may be in the best tones of his voice, thus appealing straight to the ear and causing him almost unconsciously to observe the specific qualities that go to make up that best sound? This would stimulate him to demand from his voice forthwith sounds of equal beauty throughout his entire compass, thus providing him with a positive aim to start with, and a formula for the will to act on. Or, shall we instead begin by saying, "Your method of tone-production is all wrong! Try this: expand the upper chest by elevating the superior ribs, and at the same time draw in the abdominal wall; lower the soft palate and uvula and then sing 'a' pronounced as in 'law.'"

It is easy to see that, in pursuing the latter course, we are forcing the attention of the pupil to some part or parts of the body, with the following result: an unequal distribution of energy, which prevents a perfect coöperation of the different vocal processes, which, in its turn, gives rise to a cramping of certain parts that should remain absolutely free and neutral until tone is produced. But, worst of all, there is no longer a mental formula of sound for the will to act on, because the mind is now occupied with the body; and thus, the true aim being absent, all real vocal impulse is checked. I think there surely can be no doubt that the last-named mode of procedure is not the best one; that, where a change in the quality of the tone is found to be necessary, the rational way is to go straight to the point, and show in what that change of quality should consist. Appeal to the singer's ear, as we should

to the draughtsman's eye, to perceive the *desideratum*, and let him use his own intuition as to the method of obtaining what he wants.

It may be objected that some beginners have not a single good tone in their voice to start with or pattern from. What then? The example of the true musical tone should, in that case, be given by the teacher, if possible; or, if he is unable to sing, by some other voice that the teacher must provide for the purpose. This is not the only resource, however, as the characteristic features of perfect tone can also be suggested, if not absolutely indicated, in terms. Thus, there are more practical ways than one of providing the singer with a correct aim, and when once that is established in the mind of the pupil, the method of attainment will in due time be found.

But what if repeated examples and characterizations of tone fail to produce

any effect? In that case, we must conclude that there is something wrong with the singer: that either his ear is not sensitive enough to render him a proper subject for voice-training, or that there is some physical inability to carry out his own behests. If the fault is with the ear, the case may be given up as hopeless; if, however, there should prove to be simply some obstruction or defect in the organ itself, a throat specialist may, perhaps, come to the rescue. It also often happens that there is a temporary disability to obtain from the instrument — voice — the kind of sound which the really sensitive ear of the singer demands,—a disability induced not by structural defect or disease, but simply by weakness of certain muscles, or by bad habits of long standing. Here we recommend that nature be assisted by certain exercises which will establish a proper physical balance and render

all the parts of the vocal mechanism fit to perform their respective functions readily.

It is here that the teacher's knowledge of physiology and of the vocal mechanism will stand him in good stead, as it will enable him to prescribe intelligently such gymnastics and vocal exercises as are precisely adapted to the particular need of the pupil. If the teacher really understands what kind of exercise to recommend, and instead of entering into too many particulars as to its physical object, postulates the right quality of sound as the pupil's aim in practising that exercise, I think he will never, under normal conditions, fail to effect a cure.

I believe that no teacher can do much more than show the pupil exactly what to aim at in quality and expression. But let it be understood that this must be done with the greatest precision, and that the characterization of the different

vocal sounds must be based on something more than a superficial knowledge of vocal acoustics. It is imperative that the teacher should have a positive knowledge of the *perfect vocal tone*, as it should sound in combination with every word that can be wedded to it; and also, that his ear be so sensitive that he be able at once to detect the smallest deviation from it. This demands long and serious thought and study, as well as much intelligent experimenting, and I cannot refrain from saying here, that if teachers would make vocal acoustics their principal study instead of only seeking to acquire a smattering of vocal physiology, there would be more sweet singers and fewer singing machines.

One frequently hears some teacher criticised as having "no method at all." I strongly suspect, however, that if the teacher in question failed to produce good singers, it was not because of a

lack of method, as such, but because of a lack of knowledge in what a perfect vocal sound consists. It is surprising, for instance, how few people—including musicians — are able to recognize the particular quality that makes a voice effective in a large auditorium when they hear it in a moderate sized room. How often has one heard a voice lauded with unbridled enthusiasm after a private hearing, but when the unreserved approval it has met with — perhaps by some manager — has led to a public performance, it has ended in dismal disappointment. And yet it is quite obvious to one who knows what to look for in vocal sound that a particular voice either will or will not satisfy the ear in a large hall, because the expert recognizes at once the presence or absence of that particular balance of sound which constitutes the necessary quality.

This quality is not, as is often supposed,

a something properly peculiar to one voice rather than another; it is, on the contrary, something that every voice, large or small, high or low, should possess, regardless of its individual characteristics. Therefore, when you hear some one remark, "M. has a charming voice for a parlor, but it does not satisfy you in a large hall," you may be sure that M.'s tone is faulty in some way. The truth is, it passes muster in a parlor, because in a small room the lack is not felt to such an extent that the uninitiated ear can detect it, while in a hall even the uneducated ear misses something vital from the tone. I repeat, then, that with the teacher, as with the singer, the essential is a highly sensitized ear, and a positive knowledge of the nature of vocal sound. It matters not whether the recognition of the perfect sound be partly the result of knowledge acquired through the study of vocal

acoustics, or whether it is purely intuitional; but the power to recognize it must at all costs be there, otherwise the teacher is not fit to train a voice for an artistic career.

The famous singing-masters of the last and the early part of the present century, among whom are Porpora, Tosi, Mancini, Cataneo, and Nava, had made no special study of either acoustics or dynamics, but they certainly did know the sound of a perfectly balanced vocal tone, and were keenly alive to the smallest lack therein, so that they could well afford to trust to their strong, pure musical intuitions, as results have shown.

The teachers of to-day have, I fear, in too many cases, grown accustomed to a spurious and slack quality of tone, the inevitable effect of the confusion between process and purpose, of which I have already spoken, and they have,

as it were, by common accord, grown to regard certain imperfections as natural and inevitable. To make one single illustration: they often advise a distortion of the vowel, in order to obtain a more resonant or better modulated tone in certain parts of the voice, never apparently suspecting that perfect unity between any vowel and any tone within the vocal range can be effected without yielding one iota of clearness and purity of either tone or vowel.

This is only one instance out of many that I have known; and it is the strong conviction that singing as a fine art is gradually being swallowed up in its own mechanism, and that the ideal is being buried in fathoms of technique, that emboldens me to exhort the instructors of the day to pause a while and view this noble art of singing from another standpoint than the conventional one, so that we may look forward to

hearing, in the future, singers who will stir us to our very depths, and remind us by their vital and true expressions what a divine thing the human soul is, after all.

Chapter XVIII

METHODS AND TEMPERAMENTS

THE reasons given in the preceding chapter, why a set or conventional method is harmful, are not the only ones that can be adduced.

Even were it not true that a formula of action superimposed by another mind must destroy the unity which should be maintained between tone-concept and tone-production, there are other reasons relating to the inherent difference between one individual and another, which render a cut and dried method, for the most part, injurious. For instance, the great diversity of both temperament and character, as well as physical dissimilarities, make it impossible for either the minds or the bodies of all singers to work alike to the attainment of the same end.

In some of us, the emotions need to

be stimulated or especially excited by suggestion. In others, they are always ebullient, and need, rather, to be held in check. Again, one mind forms an idea or conception much more readily than another, and the current between will and instrument is more direct; the other is slow and deliberate in aim and conscious of obstacles.

There are likewise important physical differences as to the distribution of muscular strength which cause some singers, for instance, to perform the acts of inspiration and expiration better in one way than another. Now, with regard to breathing, I hold that, instead of insisting on any particular method, exercises should be given for the purpose of bringing into play *all* the different muscles provided by nature for the acts of inspiration and expiration; the main purpose being to strengthen and develop these to their fullest capacity

and thus to increase the general breathing power, besides counteracting any inherent weakness, abnormal tendencies, or bad habits which may exist. In this way the breathing apparatus, as a whole, is rendered fit to perform all that can in any emergency be demanded of it, the special demand made on it at any particular time depending, partly on the physical condition of the singer at that time, partly on the exigency of the musical phrase, as well as on the dramatic and emotional requirement of the occasion. There can be no doubt that the various and apparently conflicting muscular processes of breathing are provided for a special purpose, that purpose being to relieve and to supplement each other; and, therefore, they should each and all alike be exercised so as to be equally ready to do their part respectively when called into play, and not developed one at the expense of the other.

There is a large variety of so-called methods adopted by different teachers, many of which are founded simply on vague ideas, the results of imperfect observation; and others not founded on either ideas or observations of any kind, but on the simple "parroting" of other people's errors. To discuss these with a view of characterizing them would be waste of time, as it would only render confusion twice confused. Independently of these, however, there are to-day at least two distinct methods of tone-production that have been worked out on a physiological basis, each one involving an entirely different mechanism from the other, and consequently bringing about different results; just as there are two distinct methods both of piano and violin playing, one with the stiff, the other with the free arm. The advocates of one method, in all these three branches of musical art, are generally hot in

their invectives against the other; according to their opinion, one method is right, the other wrong. Personal experience, however, has led me of late years to take a broader view, and I find that, in methods of singing, as in many other things, right and wrong are often only relative. In other words, what is wrong for you may be right for me; and the vital question is: Which of the two is right for you, and which for me?

There always has been, and presumably there always will be, more than one way of reaching a given result, and this is more emphatically true in singing than in anything else, because of the fact, before mentioned, that the temperament, the character, and the nervous organization of the artist must act differently on the physical mechanism in different individuals. A high-strung, emotional nature will call forth a vocal mechanism which will yield a full and

vibrant tone charged with vitality, and which will express with the greatest spontaneity every varied shade of feeling, even at cost of a goodly expenditure of energy; while a less excitable, somewhat lymphatic temperament will demand a more facile mechanism, yielding a lighter quality of tone with less variety of color and more distinguished by purity and sweetness than by vitality.

Pauline Lucca was a striking instance of the first of these two types. In the early days of her brilliant career on the operatic stage at Berlin, and at the time when she was rousing her audiences to a white heat of enthusiasm by her intensely dramatic singing, so full of color, vigor, and vitality, she was the despair of her physician; he could do nothing but insist on a complete rest of at least a couple of days after every performance. Now, had it not been Lucca's fate at that time to antedate

the throat specialist and the vocal physiologist, a remedy for this condition of things would doubtless have been found. It would have been duly revealed to her how easily she could avoid the strain on her throat by abandoning her present mode of tone-production and singing, instead, *dans la masque*. And, no doubt, had she received and followed these directions, her vocal cords would have been both spared and preserved. But we shrewdly suspect that, in her case, to save the vocal cords would have been to annihilate the dramatic artist. For a physical change of any kind, involving volition, would surely have interrupted the current of divine afflatus that urged her on to reach and penetrate the hearts of men, even through bulged vocal cords.

On the other hand, we have on the operatic stage to-day singers who are temperamentally vocalists as distinguished from dramatic singers. These

use instinctively a lighter tone because it adequately expresses their own feelings. To insist on changing the mechanism which is natural to them for that of the dramatic singer would surely be unwise, as it might result in every true impulse becoming paralyzed through the negation of its natural form of expression.

The human voice in singing has been aptly styled "a sort of orchestral combination in miniature." And that is exactly what it is at its best. Therefore, being a miniature orchestra, it is proper to use all the instruments of which it is composed, either in combination or singly, as occasion may demand. Nor should we forget that the flute is needed in an orchestra, as well as the trombone or the strings. Now, there are many singers whose voices suggest only a flute, and to which the appellation of a miniature orchestra would be entirely out of place. Such singers may exist

from two different causes, — one cause being the temperamental lack of impulse for dramatic expression, or the lymphatic temperament before mentioned; in which case the method of tone-production and the nature of the individual are at one, and all is well.

But it not infrequently occurs that a singer is taught to sound the "flute," because that is the only instrument in the miniature orchestra — voice — the mechanism of which the teacher happens to be familiar with. In other words, the instructor in question teaches the flute production, and every singer who is placed under his or her tuition must become a flute, regardless either of temperament or physique.

The pupil sings. The teacher exclaims, "Your voice is a violin, — that is all wrong; if you want to be a singer it must become a flute!" So the violin is altogether neglected and the flute is

practised. The result of this usually is a colorless tone that expresses nothing, a tone suggesting a top without a bottom. It necessarily lacks the beauty that distinguishes the tone of the singer who is temperamentally only a vocalist and nothing else; because, in her case, the flute is her legitimate instrument and therefore adequately expresses *her*, while, in the other case, it is not the legitimate instrument and therefore cannot express her.

I have had occasion to observe several interesting instances of singers who had become the victims of a method, but who, under the stimulus of real emotion, unconsciously kicked over the traces and thus stumbled upon their natural mode of expression. One instance, in particular, I have in mind. It was in an operatic performance; the artist in question had achieved celebrity, and his fame had preceded him. I went to admire, full

of pleasant anticipations; but oh, what a disappointment awaited me! I found his voice dull, colorless, and uninteresting, and the singer utterly without magnetism. I sat and wondered, "Why this reputation? Why this crowded audience assembled to worship a star that shines not?" When all of a sudden, I was startled from my reflections by a superb manly voice, full of life, vigor, and beauty, and thrilling with emotion, which carried conviction to the heart of the listener with every tone.

Could it be? Yes, it was! The self-same tenor of the dull monotonous tone!

"Aha!" said I to myself, "here is one who practises the flute, and has just stumbled on his violin, or *vice versa*. It is a case of letting go of his method and finding himself!" I could now understand how he came to be famous, for that one passionate scene alone was enough to make a lasting impres-

sion and to stamp him a great-souled artist.

Other examples of instinctively breaking away from the usually enforced method are often found in young singers who, from sheer nervous excitement, on appearing in public for the first time, forget to observe their usual rules for tone-production, with the result that they sing literally better than they know how.

And here, again, it is curious to note how, when the first excitement is over and the singer regains his presence of mind, he returns once more to his habitual uninteresting manner of singing. The audience is apt to think, in such cases, that his strength gave out—that he was lacking in staying power; the truth being that, with the return of self-control, he remembered his method, and was lost. Now, where no cut and dried method is superimposed on a singer's

intuitions, where the teacher, observing Herbert Spencer's axiom, follows the lines of least resistance and seeks to aid the process of evolution rather than precipitate a general revolution in the mentality and volition of the singer, all this waste of power is avoided.

The singer of many and varied natural emotions will learn gradually and intuitively how to use every instrument and combination of instruments in his miniature orchestra—voice—while he or she of a colder or more limited emotional nature will learn to play on one instrument or more, as the case may be, but will do it well, beautifully, and, therefore, artistically.

I foresee that some questions may be raised regarding my opinion on the subject of methods. It will, perhaps, be argued that there are acceptable singers who never would have learned to sing at all without following a prescribed method;

that numbers of people who, at first, had no idea how to turn a tune have, thanks to some particular method, been enabled subsequently to give real pleasure to their hearers. I think it well, therefore, to call attention to the fact that my arguments are not levelled at those who, being without natural talent, still wish to be crutched into singing acceptably, but at those possessing real musical perception and true artistic aspiration.

In other words, I would make the distinction between singing as an art and singing as a pastime. That the latter type of singing should satisfy the unmusical, or those who love music for its jingle, is not surprising when we remember that there are also those who delight in stencil painting and chromos.

There always has been and there always will be a large proportion of music-lovers, so called, who are pleased with the commonplace and conventional

thing, and often the more commonplace it is the more quickly they are apt to respond to it. Even where an audience is above the average in intelligence and refinement, there will always be in the highest art an unknown quantity of excellence to which their door is closed. The finest touches of an artist are always thrown away on the million, and it is given to only a very few choice spirits to recognize them, so that the truly great artist is always he who rises above the art standard of his day. But nevertheless, while a far lower grade of expression would suffice to fill the highest possible demands of public taste, it is, strange to say, precisely this unknown quantity of excellence transcending public appreciation which causes the world, in the long run, to recognize truly great art for what it is. Indeed, it would seem that the public — in some dim, unconscious way — feel the artist as

a whole, while they are incapable of appreciating the actual qualities which constitute his greatness.

Let it be understood, then, that it is of the kind of art which emanates from the aspiration to make the audience *feel* better than it *knows* that I am reasoning; and such art is, I maintain, not the product of "methods."

CHAPTER XIX

THE OLD ITALIAN MASTERS

I HAVE before had occasion to refer to the fact that the old Italian masters relied wholly on their perception of vocal sound, as such, in conjunction with personal experience, for the training and developing of voices; that they made little or no attempt to form theories of vocal mechanism. A good tone-production was, in their estimation, the result of a natural voice, that is, of good healthy vocal organs plus a musical ear; and voice control was to be obtained by long practice, patience, and perseverance in demanding of themselves the best sound they were capable of conceiving. Their motto was: "If you are sound in mind and body, if

you have a good voice and good vocal instincts, I will teach you to sing well; but if you are not endowed with all these gifts, you are not fit to become a singer." How greatly this simplified matters! What a deal of crutching and coaxing, of blind experimenting, of discouragement and failure was spared. A new candidate for instruction was tested and examined, in much the same way as one would look at a horse destined for the race-course before betting on him. They looked in the aspirant's mouth to see if the teeth were well formed and evenly set, as otherwise articulation would be imperfect; and they tested the strength of the chest, the lung power; and last, not least, they considered carefully his personal appearance; and if they found nothing that was attractive, interesting, sympathetic, or artistic therein, they would none of him.

With singers to-day it is quite another

affair. If one has no voice, the teacher undertakes to "build" it; if he has a bad production, he is taught to "place" his tones, to direct them toward some particular part of his anatomy, to form or shape the vowels in the mouth; and so thoroughly have all these deliberate ways and means been drilled into the minds of singers for two or three generations that it has actually become instinctive with nine out of ten of them to precipitate tones in the flesh without any definite idea of the quality of sound to be produced. Thus, what with mouthing their words, and groping for certain positions of the throat which may seem more favorable to their tones than others, all spontaneity has been annihilated, and singing has become artificial and labored.

The old masters believed in example rather than precept, they taught singing orally; and although it is frequently

said that they did so, not from choice, but because they had no knowledge on which to found theories of mechanism, we must certainly admit that the long list of famous singers who were trained by them proves that, at least, they were not at a disadvantage as compared with the teachers of our day, who have at their command the accumulated knowledge of over a quarter of a century of scientific investigations both in acoustics and vocal physiology.

Very little has been written by the old masters respecting their methods of training voices, as they were not much in the habit of formulating their ideas. Among the very few, however, who have written on this subject, are Tosi, a famous master in Bologna, who published a book on singing in the early part of the eighteenth century, and Mancini, who wrote a treatise on the same theme about thirty years later.

Both of these doubtless followed in the footsteps of the renowned master Porpora, teacher of Farinelli,* reputed to be the greatest singer the world has ever known; and, therefore, it will doubtless be of interest to my readers to learn what these had to say about tone, and what they regarded as the principal factors in acquiring the art of singing. In the first place, in blessed ignorance of the five different mechanisms discovered by physiologists of the nineteenth century called "registers," they recognized only two distinct qualities of tone — one they called chest tone, the other *falsetto* or head tone, — and they argued that a correct tone-production depended on the perfect blending of these two voices. In order to bring this about they recommended the student to start with the head tones and, working downward from these, carry their particular quality into

*Farinelli's real name was Don Carlo Broschi; he was a Neapolitan

all the other tones of the voice. They cited the head tones as beginning on D on the fourth line of the treble clef, or, occasionally, half a tone lower; this rule applying alike to the male and female voices, with the sole difference, of course, that the male voice sounds an octave lower than the female.

Second: they considered it best to practise on the syllables do, re, me, fa, sol, etc., before attempting to sing on vowels alone; but when the time for singing vowels was ripe they allowed no compromise on their absolute distinctness.

Third: the *legato* must be practised most diligently, that is, one note religiously sustained until the next is heard, no break, gap, space, or suggestion of an *h* between any two notes ever to be permitted. The exercise Tosi gave for facilitating this was, gliding from the vowel *a* to *e* (pronounced as in Italian),

back and forth on different notes, to be practised on all the different intervals, from the semitone to the interval of a tenth or twelfth. The correct singing of scales, arpeggios, trills, gruppetti, and roulades of all kinds being founded on this rule of practice.

Fourth: the *messa di voce* must be most industriously practised at a later stage, not only because it is in itself a "transcendent grace in singing," but also because in practising it the singer acquires proper control of the breath. This is the only way in which the old masters believed breath-control to be achieved. They knew naught of either diaphragmatic or abdominal breathing. Their refrain was: "If you want to increase your breathing capacity, make your breath maintain long tones for you; and if you want to get the finest control over it, practise a long-drawn-out tone, beginning pianissimo, swelling it out to its

fullest power, and then diminishing it till it ends pianissimo as it began, this being what the *messa di voce* really is. If you cannot sustain a tone long at first, go on trying without forcing, till you succeed; and by the time you have accomplished it, you will have acquired complete control over the breath."

Another thing which the old masters urged was the maintenance of a good position of the body; and what they called a good position was "standing erect with the chest high, and well thrown out, the head neither inclining backward nor forward." They were likewise sticklers for the *bocca ridente* or smiling mouth in vocalizing. This facial expression was considered by them to influence the sound of the voice to a remarkable degree.

I am inclined to think, however, that in forming this opinion, judging, as they did, simply from the effect of the cheerful

expression of the singer on the sound, they did not take into consideration the psychological value of the smiling mouth as a factor in bringing about, by suggestion, the state of mind which, for some reason unknown, excites and stimulates the harmonics of the tone; — I mean a mental attitude of pleasant anticipation, a sort of premonitory relish of the tone to come, which most undoubtedly favors the sympathetic quality and expressiveness of the tone, as well as its resonance and carrying power.

However, with their usual good intuitions, the two things were rightly associated together by them, even if they did ignore the presence of other influences. This insisting on a strict maintenance of the smiling mouth, however, became, later, part of a mechanical system of tone-placing, and thus was, as time went on, degraded to a mere perfunctory act, a sort of smirk

unaccompanied by any appropriate feeling. The attention of the singer was too much taken up with the various things to be done with the vocal organs to allow of any stirring of feeling by suggestion. In this way the smiling mouth gradually became obsolete, and was regarded as an old-fashioned notion, founded on nothing in particular. The singers of the present day are disposed to look back on the work of the old masters as unnecessarily slow, and to seek short cuts by means of mechanical drill of various kinds suggested by the increased knowledge of throat physiology in the present day. It is true that learning to sing by forming habits, which depend wholly on the musical perception of the pupil, is apt to take a long time where these perceptions have to be developed out of purely elemental potentialities; but this way has in the past proved sure, if slow, whereas the methods

of to-day are, to say the least, uncertain, if quick.

In the old days there was no such thing as rushing from teacher to teacher, trying first one method and then another. When a teacher agreed to train the voice of a young singer, the task was undertaken with the understanding that the pupil should be absolutely under his authority until his studies were by him pronounced completed. It was like a species of apprenticeship by the student to the master. In this way the teacher had ample opportunity to carry out his scheme of instruction in his own way, besides making a careful study of the characteristics and idiosyncrasies of the pupil and of adapting to him the line of practice and exercises accordingly. Meanwhile, the pupil grew familiar with the teacher's nomenclature and never had a chance to get confused between the different ways of putting the same

things, which is one of the evils incident to that modern restlessness which leads singers to change their teachers so frequently.

Neither did singers in those days take just a few lessons, and then undertake to teach others how to sing, on the strength of having a few theories of tone-production on the tip of the tongue (though nowhere else), theories only half understood, not at all assimilated, nor even digested.

There was no such thing as interrupting their studies by singing in church choirs, charity concerts, at afternoon teas, and under all the numerous bad and demoralizing conditions that have become an inevitable drawback to steady progress in the present day. "Studying" meant studying and nothing else; it did not mean propagating their own ignorance or exposing their inefficiency to an audience, thus discounting and inviting

criticism of the, perhaps, good earnest work of the teacher, who would, with half a chance, perhaps, have ultimately succeeded in accomplishing with honor what he had undertaken, and whose misfortune, not fault, it was that he could not also furnish brains.

I cannot refrain from quoting some rather quaint advice given by Tosi in his treatise on singing, for it emphasizes so humorously the vastly different relations of teacher and pupil in those days as compared with those at the present time. He says, "Let the teacher encourage the scholar if he improves; let him mortify him, without beating, for indolence." Tosi was evidently an innovator on the moral plane, and had made the discovery that a drubbing was not an essential in spurring on the slackening endeavors of the pupil. He also advises that singers should know their alphabet, learn to read, and also make some study

of grammar. This also is worth quoting:

"Oh! how great a master is the heart! . . . In a few lessons from it you learn the most beautiful expressions, the most refined taste; it even corrects the defects of nature; it softens a voice that is harsh, betters an indifferent one, and perfects a good one."

In saying this, Tosi builded better than he knew; a whole world of true philosophy and profound psychological law is contained in this statement, which at first might impress one as a mere sentimental rhapsody.

The above is only a sort of rough sketch of the combined views of Mancini and Tosi; but as I think it contains the pith of their formulated ideas, I submit it as it is.

CHAPTER XX

A RESTATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

IT is a rare thing for the average reader to preserve a clear memory of all the salient points of a varied argument; and therefore I have deemed it best to restate in brief some of the principal laws laid down in this treatise.

All language is at best but a Babel when used to symbolize unfamiliar ideas to minds of diverse habits; and, therefore, in varying my forms of expression, I may succeed in reaching some of my readers who might otherwise find my professions of faith abstruse or ambiguous.

The points that I have attempted to make plain are as follows:

1. That artistic singing is the result of a fine perception, either natural or acquired, of vocal sounds.

2. That vocal sound is a composite, a whole made up of component parts, which parts can be tested and recognized for what they are by a well-trained ear.

3. That, where a fine perception of tone is natural, or inborn, it seldom includes the analysis of the qualities to which it owes its perfection; in other words, the vocal tone is perceived in the concrete, and the singer ignores its component parts as such.

4. That this concrete perception of vocal tone, as related to the ear, is precisely what every artistic singer must attain; and, therefore, the principal if not the only aim of the instructor should be to stimulate and develop that perception to the fullest extent.

5. That the simplest and most effective way to educate singers consists in letting them hear the correct sound again and again, until it has indelibly impressed

itself on their minds as distinct from all other tones of voice.

6. That to this end the teacher must be able to furnish examples of the different qualities and elements of tone which go to make up the perfect voice, as well as of all the different ways in which it is used. Otherwise, the singer has nothing to awaken his dormant or latent perceptions of sound, and he may be likened to an art student who is required, at the start, to draw or paint a figure without a model.

7. In the same way that the draughtsman or painter would point out to his pupil the different relations of light and shade, the correct values, and all the different elements in detail which go to make up the perfect picture, the teacher of singing should point out to the pupil the different characteristics which constitute perfect sound; for even when the singer is able at once to imitate the

correct tone, there is no permanence in an imitation which does not include a recognition of its own features. In other words, blind imitation cannot outlive the memory of example, whereas intelligent imitation — as distinct from "parroting" — is sufficient unto itself, in that it can reproduce itself indefinitely without depending on its original source. It is a mental appropriation of an idea of tone, charged with a perception of its own conditions of being, which now becomes the singer's will, or rather, the formula through which his will acts.

8. That, whatever the physical facts of tone-production may be, it is all one to the singer, for a good or bad mechanism in singing depends purely on a good or bad idea of tone, the entire vocal apparatus responds automatically to the will, and the will acts in a single fiat through the idea of sound.

9. That the chief danger which besets

the singer is a proneness to regard the vocal organs as a primary, instead of a secondary, factor in tone-production, and to become so taken up by the way these organs perform their part that the mind is deflected from its original aim, — to wit, the effect of the sound on the ear, — with the result that little by little the ruling idea of *sound* ceases to assert itself and the will has no longer a correct formula to act on.

10. That this danger is to be overcome by a determined singleness of purpose, that purpose being sound as it is heard and not as it is made. The singer must learn to concentrate his mind correctly, by recalling it whenever it strays from its direct aim to its fleshly instrument. This is a task which, while it seems arduous at first, grows ever easier by repetition, and cannot fail at last, by patience and persistence, to be accomplished.

In its application to singing, this means that whatever we are at the time attempting, be it even a small detail in vocalization which we are trying to perfect, in order to obtain harmony between parts of a whole, our entire attention must be given to preconceiving the effect of that detail, and not to its sensation in the flesh. Or, if we are practising simply a gymnastic, involving a purely physical act, such as inspiration or expiration, still we must give our attention exclusively to the object we are aiming at; to wit, taking in as much breath as we can, and giving it up either as quickly or as slowly as possible, without concern as to *how* the breathing muscles perform their functions.

Or, if, instead of a detail of vocalization, we are aiming at a complete whole made up of parts, such as a scale, or a roulade, it is the effect of that whole, as we desire it to sound, which should

become our sole aim and absorb our undivided attention; it being understood that in our mental picture, or brain impression, of that whole its parts are included, though unconsciously.

11. That in our preparatory studies of the scale, for instance, brain impressions have been received of the separate notes comprising it, which now, without conscious volition, merge themselves into the confluent scale.

This merging of specialized brain impressions into the mental image of the concrete whole, thus effacing them from our consciousness, goes on perpetually in every stage of our artistic growth, so that, after we have consciously aimed at certain effects in our preparatory work, — such as the initial pitch of the tone, the perfect agreement of the vocalized tone therewith, the sounds of the different vowels and diphthongs, the rapid and distinct articulations of "breath-

less" consonants, — all these things fall into line without supervision, and the singer's conception of any phrase in any song includes, *unconsciously*, all these perfected elements.

12. That the imagination plays a most important part in the art of singing, and that, therefore, the richer the imagination the more varied and the more beautiful will be the expressions of the artist.

13. That dramatic singing is based entirely on the power to picture emotions and states of mind not actually experienced at the time, and the power to form a perfect conception of these dramatic expressions in unity with their musical phrases; and, therefore, the imaginative faculty, based on a close and appreciative observation or knowledge of the human emotions, is a thing to be cultivated.

In brief, an artist is he who expresses

adequately and with security all that he feels and knows; and the calibre of his art depends on how much he feels and knows, and how clear a recognition he has of beauty, harmony, and truth. To educate and develop the artist, therefore, must mean to educate and develop the man; to stimulate and encourage his aspirations; to appeal to his higher nature, as the ruler of his animal instincts; to lead him firmly and unflinchingly toward his goal, through obstacles and discouragements, teaching him the value of patient and persistent endeavor when directed by a steady purpose; to inspire him with faith in himself, courage and confidence in action; and finally, to prove to him that to be master of his art is to be master of himself.

THE END

Clara Kathleen Rogers

Author of *"My Voice and I,"*
"The Philosophy of Singing," etc.

"CLARA DORIA" was born in Cheltenham, England, January 14, 1844. She received her early musical education from her parents, John Barnett, "the Father of English Opera," and Eliza Emily Barnett, the daughter of Robert Lindley, the famous English violoncellist. At the age of twelve she went to Leipsic and was at once admitted to the Conservatorium, although three years below the minimum age requirement of that institution. Her work there included the piano with Moscheles and Plaidy, ensemble playing with Ferdinand David and Riez, harmony with Parperitz and Richter, and in her fifteenth year, singing with Professor Goetze. After concluding the whole course at Leipsic and being graduated with honors, Miss Barnett went to Berlin where she studied the piano with Von Bülow and sang with Frau Zimmerman. This was followed with two years in Italy with San Giovanni in preparation for the operatic stage, and in 1863 she made her début as Isabella in "Roberto il Diavolo." After three years of operatic work in Europe, "Clara Doria" went to London and sang

Clara Kathleen Rogers

on the concert stage for five years, coming thence to America in 1871 with the Parepa Rosa concert company, making her début in "The Bohemian Girl" at the New York Academy of Music and appearing subsequently as Donna Elvira in "Don Giovanni," the Countess in "The Marriage of Figaro," and in other roles in the principal Eastern cities.

In the winter of 1872–3, though not a member of Max Maretzek's company, she was engaged by him to sing a number of times with Pauline Lucca in "Don Giovanni," "Der Freischütz," "The Merry Wives of Windsor," etc., in New York and elsewhere. In April, largely through the interest of the late Otto Dresel, she took up her residence permanently in Boston, appearing for the first time at the Harvard Symphony concert. While still singing in concerts, she became deeply interested in teaching singing and ultimately gave up her career as a public singer entirely that she might devote herself exclusively to her pupils.

Mrs. Rogers first became known as a composer in 1882, and in 1893 she published her first work on musical criticism, "The Philosophy of Singing."